STRICTURES,

CRITICAL AND SENTIMENTAL,

ON

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

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STRICTURES,

CRITICAL AND SENTIMENTAL,

ON

THOMSON'S SEASONS;

WITH

HINTS AND OBSERVATIONS

ON

COLLATERAL SUBJECTS.

BY J. MORE.

O how canſt thou renounce the boundleſs ſtore
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!
The warbling woodland, the reſounding ſhore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields,
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the ſong of even,
All that the mountain's ſheltering boſom ſhields
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
O how canſt thou renounce and hope to be forgiven!

MINSTREL.

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M DCC LXXVII.

TO

GEORGE LEWIS SCOT, Esq.

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S

COMMISSIONERS OF EXCISE.

SIR,

YOUR generous attachment to the Author of the *Seaſons*, ſhall be my apology for prefixing your name to a work, that is intended to illuſttate their beauties. To one, who had ſo juſt an eſteem for his company and worth, while alive, ſurely his memory, cannot but be ſtill very dear. And this renewal of an intimacy, in which the heart was then ſo deeply intereſted, muſt afford ſuch a mind as your's, ſome very pleaſing and tender ſenſations.

You, Sir, are the ſole *Surviver* of that ſocial and claſſical ſociety of which our Author was one of the moſt amiable members. And could he deign a glance of approbation, from the ſuperior ſphere in which he now moves, on this humble performance, I know no patronage, to which, he would ſo frankly recommend it as your's. He was a man of worth, not of ceremony. And let me hope, as he would have done, that my reſpect for him and his works, will abundantly ſupply every other form of introduction.

It was the ſingular felicity of your friendſhip in the fortune of our Bard, that firſt ſuggeſted the idea of thus dedicating theſe *Strictures* on his Poem to you. And the opinion of the publick, I preſume, will ſufficiently authenticate my choice. For the generous ardour in which Thomſon recommends every liberal and manly deed, can only be felt and reliſhed by one, who like you, Sir, delights more in the practice than the theory of virtue.

But let me not hurt that delicacy ſo inſeparable from taſte and genius, by a panegyric as much beneath an honeſt man to give, as it would be unworthy you, Sir, to receive. The world at large knows already both who you are, and what you do, and the worthy have long treaſured it up in their hearts. With their approbation, and that of your own mind, you have great reaſon to be ſatisfied. Truſt me, the ſweet recollection of having done ſo much good, with ſo little ſhew, will ſerve you as a cordial, when all your other enjoyments are taſteleſs and forgotten.

Simplicity of manners and candour of heart, in conjunction with a mode of thinking equally original and well improved; a fund of the beſt natured humour happily tempered with taſte and politeneſs; an habitual attention to all the du-

ties of humanity; and the tendereſt regard for every ſpecies of modeſt and forlorn merit; are *qualities* not eaſily hid, but ſo inviolably connected with the chaſteſt ſenſibility, as to render a particular application of them peculiarly delicate.

THOMSON's whole poem is one of the ſweeteſt oblations, that ever was offered by genius at the ſhrine of morality. And it has been my buſineſs in theſe *Strictures* rather to delineate his ſpirit than criticiſe his manner. I only regret, they are not more worthy the ſubject they illuſtrate and the patronage they claim.

Such in truth are the ſentiments, Sir, in which with equal reſpect and eſteem I have the honour to ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your moſt obedient,

And very humble ſervant,

JOHN MORE.

THESE *Strictures*, are not a tedious detail of common-place remark, mere verbal annotations, various readings, or imitations of different writers either in thought or expreſſion. This, and every other ſort of literary parade, the Author chearfully foregoes, for what may be called moral or ſentimental criticiſm. He wiſhes, with his author, to addreſs the heart rather than the fancy, to connect ſpeculation with life, and to mingle inſtruction with amuſement. This important object he purſues not without a conſiderable ſhare of diffidence and ſolicitude. His obſervations, however apparently excentric, are all leſs or more connected with the ſubject. The Chapter *on the Uſe and Abuſe of Criticiſm* was originally delivered to a private ſociety of friends on the queſtion, Whether the Editors and Commentators of Homer and Shakeſpeare, had done theſe Writers any real ſervice? and, though containing ſome bold expreſſions, is now publiſhed without any material alteration, rather as an apology for the Author's own manner, than any intentional attack on that of others.

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ERRATA.

Page	Line	
24	21	*for* import, *read* impart
33	14	*for* ſhould, *r.* ſhall
59	1	*for* II. *r.* III
61	14	*for* ſenſative, *r.* vegative
81	10	*for* tha, *r.* that
109	23	*for* mental, *r.* mechânical
169	23	*for* ſuggeſt, *r.* ſluggiſh
196	12	*for* fictious, *r.* fictitious
204	11	*for* ſhamfull, *r.* ſhamefully

CHAP. I.

On the Genius of Poetry.

The poet's eye in a fine phrenzy rolling
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n,
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to ſhape, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.

EVERY ſpecies of true Poetry is the genuine effuſion, either of a glowing heart, or of an ardent fancy! In truth, theſe are qualities which nature ſeldom beſtows apart. Wherever we find uncommon ſenſibility, the powers of imagination are proportionably ſtrong. Hence it is often obſerved, that the ſympathetic *few*, whoſe minds have got a habit of thinking, whoſe taſtes are refined by reading, whoſe tempers are mellowed by humanity; are by turns, of all others the moſt lively, and the moſt melancholy. This brooding and muſing diſpoſition, ſo congenial to the beſt minds, and which originates partly from delicacy of organs, and peculiarity of conception, whether connected with poliſhed or uncultivated life, is the

only ſtamina of poetical merit. How uncommonly plaintive and energetical the ſtrains, in which the amiable Gray dilates this idea. The ſcene lies in a church-yard, and his *muſe*, the native ſeat of tenderneſs and ſublimity, lifts up her voice among the dead, and warbles in the moſt majeſtic and melancholy tones!

> Perhaps in this neglected ſpot is laid,
> Some heart once pregnant with celeſtial fire!
> Hands, that the rod of empire might have ſway'd,
> Or wak'd to extacy the living lyre.
> But knowledge, to their eyes her ample page
> Rich with the ſpoils of time did ne'er unroll;
> Chill penury repreſs'd their noble rage
> And froze the genial current of the ſoul.

The hiſtory of the Stoicks is proof ſufficient that equanimity ſits juſt as awkwardly on men, as dignity does on apes. Perhaps the fable of Proteus is no bad emblematical repreſentation of the human mind. Her dwelling, like his, is inviſible, ſhe is active only when impelled by certain circumſtances, occaſions, and feelings; and he was not more intent on counting his flocks and his herds than ſhe is, in arranging and digeſting her ideas. His ſleep which ſucceeded this exerciſe may refer; either to her being worn out with ſtudy, or the limits that circumſcribe her operations. Nor did he know more about time, prophet as he was, than ſhe does

to

to whom the paſt, the preſent, and the future, are in ſome ſort familiar. But moſt of all, the different ſhapes he aſſumed, eaſily and elegantly apply to her wonderful powers of improvement, and exhibit a ſtriking picture of that beautiful and new creation which attends the excurſions of every poetical genius.

The character in which there is no variety is rarely ſtriking, never original. Uniformity of temper and manners, in every ſituation, fools have dignified with the name of philoſophy, but men of ſenſe know to be dullneſs. And we ſhall moſt certainly loſe our labour, if we ſeek for any kind of excellence amidſt the ſteril ſtupifaction of apathy and phlegm. There is no merit which is not the child of exertion. Genius never ſteps forth with conſcious pre-eminence, till rouſed and excited by the proſpect of immortality, or an emulation to excel. But the moment fancy thus takes fire, and the heart thus catches the flame of glory, ſhe ſtarts from her ſlumbers, exhibits her own likeneſs, and aſſerts her natural ſuperiority. It is the captivating union of fiction and ſentiment, which then gives poetry her divineſt charms, which renders her ſo delightful a companion to the votaries of taſte, and which gives her ſo much the advantage of all her ſiſter arts.

The mind of man is equally fond and full of variety. We diſlike moſt, if not all things, in pro-

portion as we know them. Our experience, whatever we may know of nature, or have ſeen of life, does by no means exhauſt the ſubject. The largeſt acquiſitions of the longeſt lives and moſt ardent capacities, are ſtill inadequate to our natural thirſt for novelty. This is that univerſal paſſion which predominates leſs or more in all characters, moulds our tempers, ſelects our pleaſures, and determines our purſuits, which renders our preſent precarious being ſuppcrtable, and after which we continue to dance in every form, from the beginning to the end of life. That alarming vacuity or emptineſs within ourſelves, which we feel ſo often, and regret ſo much, is a moſt affecting indication of conſcious wretchedneſs, and that nothing paſt or preſent is ſatisfying or deſerves attention independant of futurity. This characteriſtic feature of the human intellect, alternately pleaſed and puzzled the greateſt philoſophers of antiquity. And a Britiſh bard, who always knew where to dive for the richeſt ore, expreſſes it with equal beauty and preciſion in theſe well known and well made lines.

Hope ſprings eternal in the human breaſt,
Man never is, but always to be bleſt:
The ſoul uneaſy and confin'd from home,
Reſts and expatiates in a life to come.

To

To comprehend this idea in its utmoſt latitude, we need only transfer our attention from life to poetry. For the ſame principles by which miſers ſo anxiouſly hoard their ſtores, by which the ſons of pride ſcramble up the ſteep and ſlippery aſcent of power, by which the votaries of pleaſure are ſo meanly abſorbed in luxury, and by which the idle of every kind, take ſo many ways of killing that time, which muſt otherwiſe kill them; diſpoſe the whole world to chace the folly, or conjure up the fiction moſt adapted to their humour. Nothing fills imagination with thoſe noble and ſublime conceptions ſo congenial to her nature, perhaps nothing greatly delights or raviſhes the heart which has not in it a certain daſh of romance.

HERE then the propitious Genius of Poetry comes to our aſſiſtance and relief, with a ſeaſonable and ſingular propriety. New worlds, new orders of being, another univerſe peopled with variety of other inhabitants, ariſe at her call; and at her call vaniſh and give way to an endleſs ſucceſſion of the ſame præternatural characters crouding in groupes on original minds, through the whole range of aërial creation. What is popular ſuperſtition in all its groteſque and prepoſterous forms, but the offſpring of this ſublime principle, diſguiſed by the monſtrous deformities of plebeian credulity. For the moment, a claſſical taſte and bold imagination reclaim and adopt them, how naturally do they in-

corporate with the pureſt poetry? Are they not then as graceful and captivating as ever they were ugly? The ſame abſurd miſhapen ſpectres, all the traditional tales of ſpells and incantations, of Magicians, Witches, Wizards, and Fairies, of Ghoſts, Goblins, and Elves, which ſeem ſo frightful in the nurſery, and are ſo ſhocking in the mouth of a clown, refined by the genius of Shakeſpeare, pleaſe in the cloſet, and raviſh in the play-houſe. Thus the vulgar have their poetry as well as the learned, and all the difference is, that the former love and reverence as true, what the latter only admire and feel as fictitious.

WHATEVER breaks the dull uniformity of life, gives new play to the affections, or is an additional outlet to the heart, may be conſidered as a valuable acquiſition to human nature.

Man's feeble race what ills await!
Labour and penury, the racks of pain,
Diſeaſe, and ſorrow's weeping train,
And death, ſad refuge from the ills of fate!
The fond complaint my ſong diſprove,
And juſtify the laws of Jove.
Say, has he given in vain the heavenly muſe?
Night and all her ſickly dews;
Her ſpectres wan and birds of boding cry,
He gives to range the dreary ſky.
Till down the eaſtern cliffs afar,
Hyperion's march they ſpy, and glittering ſhafts of war!

UNDER

UNDER the genial influence of poetry we reach a ſublimer hemiſphere, and breathe as it were a purer air. She begins our acquaintance and enlarges our correſpondence with the innocent inhabitants of elyſium; ſhe inſenſibly deſtroys our groſſer attachments, and lifts our hearts above trifles, gives us other views and other feelings; guides us by ſprings and motives but ill adapted to the littleneſs of a ſelfiſh world, and implants in our breaſts a generous ſuperiority to life, and other principles in abundance.

Beneath the good how far--but far above the great.

BY this charming art, the mind no longer trammeled within the narrow circle of the ſenſes, ſprings away, beyond the verge of reality and roams at large through all the wilds and regions of imagination. Wherever ſhe takes her flight, a thouſand new attractions bear on her view, all her tones are raiſed and tempered to the trueſt delicacy; emotions of the moſt pleaſing and ſoothing, of the ſweeteſt and ſofteſt kind awakened, her paſſions by turns thrown into the gentleſt and moſt tumultuous agitations, and the whole circle of agreeable ſenſations, as if touched and realized by the magic of enchantment, aſſemble in unceaſing variety and often raviſh and ſurpriſe the reader as well as the writer. So that ſhould the time ever come when a ſpirit ſo

liberal and benign ſhall give way to the ſavage dæmon of luxury and corruption, who would not join the poet's mournful apoſtrophe!

And thou ſweet Poetry, thou lovlieſt maid;
Still firſt to fly where ſenſual joys invade;
Unfit in theſe degenerate times of ſhame,
To catch the heart or ſtrike for honeſt fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My ſhame in crowds, my ſolitary pride.
Thou ſource of all my bliſs and all my woe,
That found'ſt me poor at firſt and keeps me ſo;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurſe of ev'ry virtue fare thee well!

Such is the fine contexture and beautiful ſymmetry of nature, that a certain inexplicable vein of ſympathy runs through all her works. Things animate and inanimate affect each other in a manner perfectly myſterious. In what circumſtance do not human affections at leaſt, branch out and multiply. Even local attachments often conſtitute no ſmall ſhare of our happineſs or miſery. Like thoſe ſhrubs which equally take root in every poſition and every ſoil, wherever we are, and wherever we go, our minds invariably cling to the objects around us. Now the peculiar buſineſs of all ſentimental poetry is to trace minutely every fibre of the heart, through all the windings, intricacies, and variety of its motions, and to touch every occaſional delicacy

cacy in its proper tone. This is the great archetype whence the genius of poetry borrows all her faireſt and moſt elegant forms; whatever ſhe creates or fabricates, is ſo far excellent only as it bears this reſemblance, muſt ſtill be in nature and truth, otherwiſe her fables were monſters without a likeneſs, were images without an original. For probability is that inſuperable barrier which bounds her wildeſt excurſions,—that inviſible GENIUS, which clothes her moſt romantic ſcenes with beauty and proportion, which gives reality and life to her fictions, and which makes her moſt uncommon deſcriptions intereſting, becauſe it makes them natural.

IT is the ſpirit alone, that diſtinguiſhes poetry, juſt as characters take their peculiar colouring from the caſt or complexion of particular minds. The moſt abſurd nonſenſe in the world, as it often does, may either drawl in meaſure, or ſtraddle in rhyme. Pope, calls ſome of the poetry of his times, *proſe run mad.* Moſt of ours, is at beſt but prattle, or fuſtian in manacles. To make verſes by the well known laws of cadence and quantity, or tag lines together by ſyllables of ſimilar ſounds, is an art which requires no invention at all, which may be accompliſhed without any vigorous exertion, ſo eaſy and mechanical, in ſhort; that the greateſt dunce in nature, by the mere dint of application, may acquire more facility in it, than a firſt rate genius. Hence poetry aſſumes every kind of dreſs,

and

and is known alike in all; juſt as the elegant and graceful motions of a fine woman are ſeen and felt in every maſque. So that I much doubt if any real Poet can write with ſucceſs, in a counterfeit character. For either his ideas or expreſſion muſt frequently betray him without the aid of numbers.

JOHNSON is ſuch a ſlave to harmony, that he never ſpeaks a word but in time. All his writings are equally and every where enriched with a vein of the pureſt and ſublimeſt imagery. He has the genius in an eminent degree and wants nothing but the regularity of meaſure, or the prettineſs of rhyme, to make him one of our moſt finiſhed moral and ſentimental poets.

IN his ſtyle, or a ſimilar one, though ſurely with much more ſimplicity and fire, MILTON perhaps might have wrote, but for the age in which he lived. From his letter on Education, however, the following ſentence breathes a fullneſs and harmony not inferior to the moſt elaborate one in the Rambler.

I ſhall detain you no longer in the demonſtration of what we ſhould not do, but ſtraight conduct you to a hill ſide, where I will point you out the right path of a virtuous and noble education, laborious indeed at the firſt aſcent, but elſe ſo ſmooth, ſo green, ſo full of goodly proſpects and melodious ſounds on every ſide, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.

THE

THE muſe of Sterne, though perhaps he never made a couplet in his life, we often ſurpriſe warbling as it were by accident in the ſweeteſt and tendereſt ſtrains. Like the Britiſh Nightingale indeed, ſhe rarely prolongs her ſong, but her every note goes to the bottom of the heart. A more poetical idea never warmed the human imagination than that occaſioned by uncle Toby's oath. His expreſſion inſenſibly catches the ſublimity of the thought.

The accuſing ſpirit, which flew up to heaven's chancery with the oath, bluſhed as he gave it in, and the recording angel as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.

FLEXIBILITY is the great and principal characteriſtic of a dramatic genius. What wonderful verſatility of thinking, ſpeaking, and acting, marks the poetical powers of Shakeſpeare. The exhibition in the Jubilee, ſplendid and magnificent as it appears, is but a faint emblem of what figures, machinery and movements, warmed and occupied his large and fertile imagination. And yet through the whole range of the drama, is it not ſtrange and unprecedented that his poetical ſpirit never forſakes him, never flags, but uniformly beats time from the higheſt to the loweſt, with all the flexions and functions of humanity! It even ſeems peculiar condeſcenſion in his very Clowns to blab their buffoonry in proſe.

WHAT makes the Letters of Gray publiſhed by Maſon, ſo engaging to readers of taſte, but that they abound in poetical flights *. Though he affects

* Wit and Dullneſs, are not more reconcileable than light and darkneſs; though they ſometimes run into one another, by ſhades, totally imperceptible. Nature has eſtabliſhed an eternal ſeparation between them, which art, in vain, ſtruggles to demoliſh. Thus all the conceptions, feelings, and eſtimations, of ordinary and original minds, are in a ſtate of unalterable contraſt. They agree in nothing but reciprocal upbraidings; for want of mutual acquieſcence.—Genius is a ſpecies of enthuſiaſm, which none but a genius comprehends. Its movements, to all others, appear juſt as myſterious and eccentric as thoſe of a comet. There is an ardour and pathos inſeparable from its minuteſt exertions, which they do not underſtand becauſe they do not feel, and which ſtrike them only with an air of extravagance. Even in ſuch compoſitions, as are expected to make the deepeſt impreſſion, whatever touches moſt, is often moſt diſliked. Why, for example, in the grave and ſolemn ſtyle; are the ſallies of imagination ſo uniformly and prudiſhly reprobated? Is it, that theſe are incompatible with a manly vigour, or ſerious earneſtneſs? No: While the mind is on the oppoſite extreme to every ſenſation of levity, the moſt affecting effuſions of the deepeſt deſpair, are yet full of them. From theſe, ſhe derives all her ſtrength and energy. Theſe give her an elevation and independance which create attention and reſpect. By theſe, ſhe ſurmounts every obſtacle, commands

to ſpeak with ſome diſlike of poetry in proſe, no man indulges it more, and yet we ſtill wiſh he had been leſs on his guard againſt it. His uncommon genius always ſtruggles under reſtraint, but whenever

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mands conviction, and ſeizes the heart. Under the ſanction of theſe, her ſentiments riſe to ſublimity, and breathe an air of inſpiration! The moſt poliſhed expreſſion, the cloſeſt reaſoning, and the chaſteſt eloquence in the world are good for nothing without *poignancy*. This is that true *attic ſalt* which deſcriminates every ſpecies of ſterling poetry and oratory, from the frigid inſipidity of didactic dullneſs; and which is ſo ſtrangely and univerſally obnoxious to the ſarcaſms of the vulgar. Their averſion to every thing for which they have no reliſh is excuſeable. They are culpable only, in thinking with a freedom, which they condemn in others. Hence, whatever captivates the affections, ſurpriſes the fancy, or ſtrikes the attention, they denominate a *flight*, which in their dictionary is always a term of contempt. In truth, *flights* of this kind have been treated by every lettered and unlettered pedant, ſince the world began, with a ſneer. Aſk what they mean by that opprobrious term, and ten to one, they cenſure the beſt paſſage of the beſt book you can put into their hands.

Great wits, ſometimes may glorioufly offend,
And riſe to faults true critics dare not mend,
From vulgar bounds with brave diſorder part,
And ſnatch a grace, beyond the reach of art.

the

the miracles of nature paſs before him, as they often do, ſhe inſtantly ſhakes of the reins and bids defiance to all his precautions. How pictureſque and particular the following ſhort deſcription of Kent. Though not ſufficiently acquainted with the country to aſcertain its juſtneſs, I feel its beauty, I think myſelf on the very ſpot, I ſee diſtinctly and minutely every object he mentions.

In the weſt part of it, from every eminence, the eye catches ſome long reach of the Thames or Medway, with all their ſhipping: in the eaſt, the ſea breaks in upon you, and mixes its white, tranſient ſails, and glittering blue expanſe, with the deeper and brighter greens of the woods and corn.

But the genius of poetry appears no where ſo lovely and engaging as when it mingles with the ſoftneſs and delicacies of the female character. Among other ſtrange features of the times, it is none of the leaſt unaccountable, that the feminine genius never ſhone in fuller and ſweeter majeſty, yet never ſuffered ſuch ungentle, ungenerous, and unmerited abuſe as it does at preſent. Who knows not that this bleſſed principle is the chief leſſon our youth are taught, from a late celebrated ſyſtem of Politeneſs, as if good manners conſiſted in rudeneſs to the Ladies, or we ſhould pleaſe only in proportion as we thought them contemptible. Their worth however to every candid and congenial mind,

is

is equally known and felt, in all the walks of domeſtic life. Though confined intirely to matters of pure taſte and elegance, yet would it not be undeſerving more general approbation. The author of *An Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of Shakeſpear*, diſcovers an energy of thought, and a delicacy of ſentiment, which rank her among our beſt poets, and raiſe her ſex above the inſolence and envy of all who affect to degrade them. Speaking of the origin of poetry, how beautifully does ſhe enter into the ſpirit and enthuſiaſm ſhe deſcribes. I quote the paſſage, chiefly for the idea ſo philoſophically juſt and poetical, that concludes it.

The ancient poet was admitted into the ſynod of the gods, he diſcourſed of their natures, he repeated their counſels, and without the charge of impiety or preſumption, diſcloſed their diſſentions, and publiſhed their vices. He peopled the woods with nymphs, the rivers with deities; and, that he might ſtill have ſome being within call to his aſſiſtance, he placed reſponſive echo in the vacant regions of air.

IMITATION ſeems the only track in which all ordinary minds are doomed to trudge. Thus in life, as well as in writing; very few have either merit or magninimity enough to burſt the barriers of cuſtom. We learn to move and do every thing, as formally, and as mechanically too, from the example and inſtruction of thoſe around us, as parrots or

magpies,

magpies, to chatter in their cage. This is the field which has been ſo very prolific of dunces in every nation and climate under heaven, where all ſorts of literary vermin breed and ſwarm innumerable. Indeed, they could not live in another element. Here, to be ſure, nature has ſown them with a liberal hand, and, like her other productions, when miſplaced, they become ridiculous, uſeleſs, or pernicious only, as tranſplanted by art.

An Original, though accidentally ſituated, even in this ſhade, cannot long be hid. Like the oak, fling him where you will, he is always ſurely, however ſlowly, towering above his fellows, and aſpiring to be Monarch of the foreſt. He often catches the very genius, and reflects the very ſpirit and fire of his maſter, ſometimes improves and elevates him to a degree of perfection which he knew not before. How remarkably is this obſervation exemplified in Virgil and Milton. Homer, we muſt allow is the original author of that ſublime ſpecies of poetry, in which they both excel. But does not the one refine, and the other exalt him. From the *firſt*, he receives that taſte and purity which alone ſeemed wanting to the perfection of his ſtrains; from the *ſecond*, that majeſty and magnificence to which there is nothing equal in human compoſition.

Both as a Dramatic and Lyric poet, Thomſon has many equals, and many ſuperiors. Though none of

of theſe, ſeemed the walk, for which nature chiefly deſigned him; he thought it no diſparagement to ſtart with ſuch a liſt of illuſtrious competitors, as then, occupied the road to fame. And it may be ſaid of him, perhaps, with ſome juſtice, what can hardly be ſaid of any other modern poet, that he has left nothing behind him, with the public, which has not a very conſiderable ſhare of merit, which is not ſtamped with a ſenſibility and ardour worthy the Author of the Seaſons.

But however he ſhould rank in theſe reſpects, in this country at leaſt, he may be ſtiled, I think with ſome propriety, the father of deſcriptive poetry. All our preceding poets of any eminence and character, had occaſionally elevated their ſentiments, and embelliſhed their language, with various pictures and ſimilitudes, from the endleſs and complicated ſcenery which nature exhibits in ſo many forms to the mind, and impreſſes in ſo many ways on the fancy. Theſe Thomſon conſtitutes his leading theme, views and celebrates excluſively.

Pastoral poetry, is a ſimple delineation of thoſe rural objects, with which, ſuch as lead a paſtoral life, may be ſuppoſed moſt acquainted. The beſt Eclogues we have, however, are no more than partial ſketches of the identical ſpots to which they ſeverally refer. Shepherds were in no period of hiſtory, in no quarter of the globe, diſtinguiſhed either for delicacy of ſentiment, or acuteneſs of

obſervation. And to make them ſpeak the language of much intelligence, large experience, or ſtrong thinking, would be out of all character, and conſequently cenſurable in this kind of poetry. The line which Thomſon chalked out for himſelf, laid him under none of theſe reſtrictions. And it was reſerved for him, who had his birth and education among the bleak and deſart wilds and hills of North Britain, to preſent the world with a graphical map of the year, to which there is no parallel, in this, or perhaps in any other language. Whatever is great and ſublime, groteſque and horrible, pictureſque and extraordinary, tender and affecting, beautiful and charming, in the whole circle of the ſeaſons, among the vegetable, the animal, or the rational kingdoms, he characterizes in lineaments which none can miſtake, in colours which no time can outlive!

An Engliſh poet of the preſent age, to whom, eſteemed as he is, the publick has not yet done ſufficient juſtice; ſpeaks of our author in a manner that does equal honour to his head and his heart. Superior to all thoſe national partialities, "Thoſe "little things which ſeem ſo great to little men." After naming many of our beſt poets, he thus celebrates the Author of the Seaſons.

—Next Thomſon came,
He, curious Bard, examin'd every drop

That

That gliſtens on the thorn; each leaf ſurvey'd,
Which Autumn from the ruſtling foreſt ſhakes,
And mark'd its ſhape, and trac'd in the rude wind
Its eddying motion. Nature in his hand
A pencil, dip'd in her own colours, plac'd,
With which the ever-faithful copieſt drew
Each feature in proportion juſt. Had art
But ſoften'd the hard lines, and mellow'd down
The glaring tints, not Mincio's ſelf would roll
A prouder ſtream than Caledonian Tweed.

CHAP. II.

On the Uſe and Abuſe of Criticiſm.

Ten cenſure wrong for one who writes amiſs.

THE beſt, and perhaps the only proper uſe of Criticiſm, is the proſcription of bad Authors. With theſe, every walk of literature ſwarms, and every claſſical production is pillaged. Indeed, the moment the art of writing is ſolely engroſſed by the vulgar, it becomes contemptible. Nor are they leſs pernicious in all the departments of taſte and ſcience, than the moſt noxious vermin to the fruits of the ground. For it is not every one who is teaſed with the itch of ſcribbling——it is not every Dunce whoſe heart bounces with ſelf-conceit——it is not every Pedant, who has loitered away his days in a college, among boys, books, and buſts, that has a right to aſſume a tone of deciſion, and preſcribe for the taſtes and feelings of mankind. But vanity, the dupe of every mean and mercenary impulſe, ſtruts in every likeneſs, and proſtitutes every character. And this is the great fountain, whence all thoſe ſtreams of dulneſs originate, which unavoidably deluge ſociety with a torrent of abſurd writing, and thinking, of falſe philoſophy, and ſyſtematic nonſenſe.

SELFISH

Selfish and abject minds, are eternally occupied in imitating and depreciating that worth, which they can neither reach nor ſuppreſs. Whatever they do, has only the ſhadow of excellence. They have no living but in the ſphere; no character, but as ſatellites of genius. Nor could they exiſt, but for the nouriſhment ſhe vouchſafes, but for the ſhelter ſhe affords them. And yet, like the ungrateful ivy that undermines the wall, to which it clings for ſupport, they exert their utmoſt endeavours in deſtroying the very cauſe, to which they owe their conſequence.

The literary, as well as the buſy world, is every where over run with impoſtors. Which of the learned profeſſions, for example, has not its conjurors? But all are not guilty alike. Their pretenſions ſhould therefore be tried by ſome infallible ſtandard, that thoſe who can, may at leaſt have ſome chance of eſcaping the common reprobation. Here impartial criticiſm preſides, and holds the balance with a ſteady and delicate hand. She never imputes that to them as a fault, which is only their misfortune, nor blames them ſo much for what they are, as for what they affect to be. This is that true Ithurial ſpear, by the ſlighteſt touches of which, every maſque vaniſhes, and all things aſſume at once their own original and undiſguiſed likeneſs.

Did we view things aright, nothing could ſtrike us as more unſeemly and prepoſterous than human pride. The proud man is always intruding, and always repulſed: Nor knows he any other feelings, than thoſe alternately ſuggeſted by preſumption this moment, and mortification the next. He would ever be above all, and all are for that reaſon, equally intereſted in keeping him down. There is a diſpoſition in mankind to put him back, merely becauſe he is conſtantly putting himſelf forward. We check impudence as naturally, as we wiſh to encourage modeſty. To him no affection is ſo grateful as that of eſteem; no breath ſo ſweet as that of applauſe; no language ſo ſoothing as that of the moſt fulſome flattery. His own importance to himſelf, is too dear an idea, ever to render the moſt extravagant incenſe of this kind unacceptable. Continue to glut the ambition of his heart, by a ſordid proſtitution of your own, and you ſhall find him, of all men, the moſt candid, generous, and friendly. But the moment your ſimplicity betrays you into one ſyllable, that would rob him of the ſacrifice he expects, his ideas of your ſubject will undergo a total revolution. He will inſtantly call your judgment in queſtion, becauſe it coincides not with his; he will diſlike you in proportion as he thinks you miſtaken, and a reſentment ſuggeſted by ſuch invidious feelings, is likely to laſt for ever. Wounded pride is incurable, and diſappointment

is

is perhaps the only crime which an aſpiring mind can never thoroughly forgive. This however, like moſt other inordinate affections, generally overſhoots its mark, but never ſo effectually as when it borrows the crutches of dulneſs, and becomes infamous, ſolely by graſping at fame. Nothing but detection and reprobation are due, to all ſuch claims, as have no foundation in truth. On thoſe, who from the worſt intentions, put on the beſt appearances, we cannot be too ſevere. And who knows not, that dunces are commonly as pernicious in ſcience, as noxious in literature, as hypocrites in religion. Indeed, they act the ſame part, and meet with a ſimilar reward. Preſumption is the crime, and contempt the puniſhment of both.

Perhaps, nothing more debilitates the liberal and manly ſpirit of true criticiſm, than a memory overloaded with dead and foreign languages, and a head inveloped in theories and ſyllogiſms. Genius may break through theſe clouds, and like the ſun in a vapoury ſky, ſhine with additional ſolemnity and magnificence, from the darkneſs and gloom that ſeems to intercept its ſplendour, but all others muſt be loſt and expire in the fog. Erudition operates on common minds, like a hearty meal on ſickly ſtomachs; it lies an undigeſted load, and produces a fever, that puts all their faculties out of order. Altogether ignorant of ſuch ideas as real impreſſions of nature ſtamp on the mind,

they raſhly pronounce on every thing by certain pre-conceptions wrought into a ſyſtem by art, and the ancients, ſanctified by dulneſs, and propagated from a ſlaviſh reverence for popular opinion. Whatever correſponds with this ſtandard, they indiſcriminately applaud, but woe unto the Author, woe unto the work, and woe unto the paſſage which does not.

For my own part I really do not ſee much utility, I am ſure there is ſometimes no great merit, and always very little pleaſure in expoſing the blemiſhes of original writers. A poet would tell us, they are peculiarly ſacred to fame, and that her voice is an everlaſting attendant on their *ſhade*. "Mortals!" ſhe ſays, "reſpect with a mixture of admiration "and tenderneſs, the memory of my ſons. Their "laurels are the boons of heaven, and for their "immortality, heaven itſelf is reſponſible. Their "works are intended not to provoke your cen-"ſure, but to ſtimulate your emulation. Open "your hearts to the pleaſures they import, and "ſhut your eyes againſt the ſlips they diſcover. "But expect not to imitate their blunders with im-"punity, unleſs you can alſo make the ſame atone-"ment which they made, by reaching an equal "degree of perfection with them. Till then, mo-"deſty is the leaſt reſpect you owe them, and per-"haps the only way you can do them no injury, "is never to mention them, but in terms of ap-"probation."

This

THIS ſcrupulous attention to their failures, is methinks, at beſt, but a poor return for the infinite pains they have taken to entertain and inſtruct us. With this friendly intention they have done at leaſt as well as they could, and we are ſo ſtrangely capricious as to chide and cenſure them for not doing better. Indeed, there is no end, at all, to the captious demands of petulance and preſumption. Inſtead of looking up with gratitude to thoſe generous benefactors of mankind who have thus contributed ſo liberally to their improvement and perfection; inſtead of receiving their donations with affectionate humility, like the plebeian cur, we ſnarl and ſnap at the very hand that feeds us.

FAULTS, in the vicinity of great beauties, may eſcape obſervation, and taſte receive ſome improvement from diſcrimination. No performance, it will alſo be alledged, can plead exemption from criticiſm, becauſe the Republic of Letters is deeply intereſted in her deciſion. Indeed, the more excellent any performance is, the more neceſſary does it become to aſcertain its merit, and point out its defects, leaſt novices in literature ſhould blindly admire, and imitate the very blunders of favourite Authors.

UNDER this plauſible but trite pretext, pedantry with more than pontifical ſolemnity, has fulminated her rules and canons in all ages. Hence the moſt exalted and glorious conceptions that ever cha-

characteriſed the circle of ſuperiour minds, have ſometimes been eſtimated by the partial opinion of thoſe who had really no conceptions at all. Nor does it unfrequently happen, that ignorance, and the ſpleen fit profeſſed, arbiters of wiſdom and wit. Oh Shakeſpeare, thou firſt and ſweeteſt of bards, what though nature laviſhed on thee her choiceſt gifts, and bade thee ſhine forth the wonder and delight of ſucceeding ages! How often has not art; with preſumptuous raſhneſs, ſet bounds to thy fancy, and condemned thee only, becauſe unable to keep thee company? Not all the claſſical ardour that fired thy heart, not all the ſenſibilities that mingle in thy ſtrains, not all the lovely forms that wanton at thy call, nor all the viſionary creations, graceful and captivating as they are, that elevate thy muſe beyond a rival, keep thy critics at defiance, or inſpire them with one ſentiment of modeſty and diſcretion. Go, ye quibbling generation, and fret yourſelves by marking the ſpots, while others are charmed with the beams of the ſun. You are no more qualified to decide on the flights of Genius, than the deaf on the fitneſs of muſical harmony and expreſſion. And the Poet's ſarcaſm will ſting, when your pitiful comments are forgotten.

In what retreat, inglorious and unknown,
Did genius ſleep, when dulneſs ſeiz'd the throne?

Most

Most readers regard not half ſo much the principles, as the effects of good poetry. And all who judge for themſelves, moſt certainly, and juſtly, deſpiſe the arbitrary deciſions of criticiſm, which claſh with their own ſenſations. Surely, men of taſte and genius, need not be told, in peruſing a poem, or work of merit, when to cenſure and applaud. If light does not riſe ſpontaneouſly, all the ſcientific jargon, from Ariſtotle down to Bentley, will not produce it. You may as well bid the dead riſe, as the phlegmatic feel. Our judgment here, muſt be guided ſolely by our own hearts. Whatever gives us pleaſure, challenges our eſteem; and our praiſe is ſtill in proportion to the delight we receive. We do not mind what critic may have damned the paſſage. As we pronounce entirely, and only for ourſelves, it ſtrikes us as good or bad, merely as it does, or does not produce in our minds that ſenſibility and warmth which the author intended. To this purpoſe, the following pointed maxim of Pope, is founded in nature and experience.

> A perfect judge, will read each work of wit,
> With the ſame ſpirit that its author writ.

The vulgar then, are the only gainers by this ſpecies of criticiſm. But, I beſeech you, in what? Can it give them perceptions which Nature did not?

not? It may whet their minds with petulance, and tincture their tempers with acrimony, but affords neither wings to fancy, nor ſublimity to thought. No. Genius is the inſpiration of Heaven, and to feel, we muſt, in ſome meaſure, ſhare its energy. I would as ſoon expect an aſs to be tutored and beaten into the ſtatelineſs and vivacity of a ſteed, as that a dunce, with all the tutelage of art, could be made either to comprehend or imitate the genial excurſions of poetry. By drudgery indeed, a ſwarm of mere mechanical artificers, may in time, be conjured up, who ſhall carry their unhallowed impoſitions, into the regions of imagination; and, by the ſanction of preſcription, ſupplant the fires of Apollo. But their exiſtence is as temporary as it is pernicious. Like every thing beneath immortality, they live but to die. And does that art deſerve to be cultivated, which is thus calculated only to give a momentary but impudent eclat to dulneſs.

A FASTIDIOUS taſte, to ſay the leaſt of it, is a very troubleſome companion. It delights in obtruding things with which no wiſe man would willingly cultivate an acquaintance, and turning up to your view, whatever moſt requires to be kept out of ſight. From this prolific ſource of vexation and caprice, moſt of our preſent unhappineſs ſprings. It debilitates the judgment, renders the temper querulous and lofty, gives the mind too fine an edge

edge for life, and by frequently irritating, deadens at laſt, the beſt feelings of the heart. You may call it, if you will, the microſcope of the underſtanding, which poſſeſſes this peculiar quality; that it leſſens every excellence and magnifies every deformity.

Some minds are unhappily tortured with diſpoſitions ſo extremely unfavourable to their own comfort, that they ſeldom or never have it in their power to be pleaſed. Under the vicious influence of this barbarous kind of refinement, theſe dull and dark apprehenſions aſſimilate only with the dulleſt and darkeſt objects. They aſſiduouſly avoid the light in which true worth is beſt ſeen, and are eternally poking into every bye corner, with an unnatural and unſeemly attachment to their own infelicity. And ſuch, all the world over, are pedants in literature, quacks in ſcience, hypocrites in friendſhip, and enthuſiaſts in religion. Thus, nothing affords an aſylum to ſimplicity from the dark deſigns of malevolence; honeſty itſelf is not exempted from the fouleſt imputations; innocence often bleeds at the unrelenting ſhrine of ſuſpicion, and genius, that deſerved a better fate, ſometimes periſhes an inglorious victim to the rude animadverſions of falſe delicacy.

Persons of ſtrong ſenſibility, not ſufficiently fortified with a proportionable ſhare of good ſenſe, are extremely liable to this; and, indeed, to every

ſort

ſort of affectation. Their fancies, blaſted by pride and peeviſhneſs, get quite the better of their judgments, circumſtance and ſhew engroſs their whole attention. They have not a thought but how they may ſhine, nor do a deed but with a view to ſwell their own importance. It is not intrinſical merit, but mere exterior, that attracts their eſteem. Perſpicuity and eaſe in writing, without frippery and fineſſe, like candour of mind and ſimplicity of conduct, have in their eyes no charms. You may hear them chime the terms through all their changes, with a moſt tireſome prudery; but the idea evaporates in the very ſound that conveys it. Take them on their own word, they are perfectly ſentimental; conſult your own feelings, and you will find they want an heart. In ſhort, they are pleaſed only with what forcibly ſtrikes their ſenſes, dazzles their imaginations, or agitates their paſſions.

In common life, we may ſometimes obſerve, the geſtures that are leaſt ſtrong and prominent, to be moſt ſentimental and ſtriking. There is a very emphatical ſoftneſs inſeparably connected with the exterior of elegant minds. A word, a ſigh, a look, inſenſibility itſelf, under a peculiar deſcription, goes to the very bottom of our ſouls. Ideas of this kind, expreſſed with eaſe and energy, produce all that ſweet romantic and pictureſque tenderneſs, which, to perſons of true taſte, ſo remarkably

diſtinguiſh

diſtinguiſh and endear the writings of Otway, Richardſon and Sterne. But even theſe beauties could never have become ſo popular as they are, apart from circumſtances, plots, incidents, and all the machinery of fiction with which they ſtand connected, and which are more generally intereſting, only becauſe more noiſy and tumultuous. Few, even of thoſe who would be thought moral writers, few critics, and ſtill fewer readers, transfer their attention from minuteneſs of expreſſion, to the ſecret movements of the heart. How many prefer formality and affectation, in all their gigantic and prepoſterous ſhapes, to the moſt amiable and unaſſuming ſimplicity. Their favourite authors are not thoſe, who abound moſt in nature and truth, who write as they feel, and who touch the maſter ſprings of human attachment, becauſe they never loſe ſight of life and manners, but thoſe, who are either choked with abſtraction, larded with trifles, poiſoned with opinions, or fermented with Romance.

THESE obſervations, with many others that might be ſuggeſted to the ſame purpoſe, have given me a thorough averſion for that ſort of criticiſm, which ſhews no more veneration for the monuments of genius, than for the mole-hills of a dunce. I may, however, be wrong; I ſpeak only for myſelf. Such a ſolitary and inconſiderable voice as mine, can make few proſelytes, and need give no offence. It might perhaps be for my intereſt,

tereſt, in more things than one, both to think and ſpeak as others do.—Ye men of erudition and ſcience, ſuffer me to contemplate and admire you at a diſtance. It is not for the vulgar to peep into myſteries. While Reaſon and Sentiment are at variance, while Taſte and Senſibility continue irreconcileable, while Criticiſm reigns independent of Nature and the heart; give me ignorance, give me barbarity, give me any thing but a quibbling head and a captious temper. Only permit me to indulge my own humour, and gratify my fancy the beſt way I can. Trouble not yourſelves circumſcribing the movements of my affections, nor tell me, that my boſom ſhould not warm, that my heart ſhould not melt, that my eyes ſhould not water, when they do. Blaſt not becauſe you deign not to ſhare my humble enjoyments. Either forbear your cenſures, give me other ſenſations, or blame me leſs for what I have. It is likely after all, and why ſhould it not, that you will continue to cenſure, and I to enjoy. Nor take it amiſs, that the authors you ſometimes treat with ſo little mercy, afford, notwithſtanding, ſo much delight. For ſo capricious is the taſte of the public, that others will always read, though you ſhould always rail.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

On Thomſon's *Powers of Deſcription.*

IT ſeems almoſt unneceſſary to remark, that by *deſcriptive poetry* here, we chiefly mean what refers to external nature, and what has no direct or immediate connection either with the human character, or any department of ſocial life. Now that the view ſhould be properly bounded, that every thing ſhould be diſtinctly ſpecified, that all the objects ſhould be coloured from Nature, are three particulars which, to one who knows but little of the art, appear peculiarly indiſpenſible in landſcape painting. Do but examine the *Seaſons* by theſe principles, and you ſhould find them preſerved almoſt inviolate through the whole poem.

SECT. I.

THE firſt of theſe rules refers to what critics have called, in the canting and technical jargon of their art, *unity of ſubject.* In this reſpect, no Poet ever trod on more ſlippery ground, or had a more difficult point to manage, than Thomſon. Diſtinct as the ſeaſons of the year may ſeem to a ſuperficial obſerver, the weather, the objects, and the ſentiments which diſcriminate them moſt, yet

run into one another, eſpecially in our variable climate, with inconceivable delicacy. How often are we not almoſt as cold and uncomfortable in ſome days of Summer, as in many of Winter; little leſs languid in Spring, than in Summer; and hardly more ſpiritleſs and exhauſted in Autumn, perhaps, on many occaſions, than in any other month of the year. No wonder our Poet is ſometimes betrayed into ſlips of this kind. Hence he ſtumbles on the very threſhold, and ſpeaks in the firſt period of his *Spring*, of *Muſic veil'd in a ſhower of ſhadowing roſes.* Theſe delicate and tender flowers are not certainly quite ſo early in our iſland. Had he wrote in a warmer climate, where vegetation is much more forward than here, fact, perhaps, might have countenanced this beautiful exordium.

It may, however, not a little ſoften this, and other criticiſms of a ſimilar claſs, that Thomſon, in every ſeaſon, generally tranſports his readers to that part of the globe which feels and diſcovers its influence moſt remarkably. In *Spring*, for example, his enthuſiaſm, of which he had a very liberal ſhare, inſenſibly flings him among thoſe enchanting climes, where the ravages of Winter are never felt ſo fiercely, and where Nature ſtruggles not ſo hardly as with us, in accompliſhing a general renovation. Not ſatisfied with deſcribing the mild and temperate influence of Summer in England, he

he gives a view of it, in its moſt fervid and inſufferable empire, where vegetables, animals and mankind, are almoſt ſcorched to death, and obnoxious to all the inclemency of a parched earth, a ſulphureous air, and a vertical *Sun*. Fertile as our fields are, he reminds us of others, which are ſtill bleſſed with more irriguous ſoils, more genial ſun-ſhine, more bountiful harveſts, and vineyards loaded with a richer and better ſtore. His Muſe flies on the wings of Winter, through the frozen territories of the Polar Circle, and peers over the dreary horrors of that dark inhoſpitable region, where froſt piles up her liquid ſtores in mountains of inflexible ice, the ſummits of which, mingle with the clouds.

It does ſingular honour to the taſte and diſcernment of our ſpeculative Bard, that he is ſo particularly careful never to ſpecify an object, common to all the ſeaſons, in any but that one, in which it is either moſt frequent, or moſt ſtriking.

How natural and unavoidable to a fancy like his, while deſcanting at large, on every beauty of reviving Nature, to trace the myſterious progreſs of the ſame principle in the animal tribes. The paſſion of love is not limited in its operations, to any particular ſeaſon of the year, more than another; but now was the time to compliment and delineate that generous and divine ſympathy, which ſo excluſively moulds and controuls the ſexes, at leaſt,

in the ſpring-time of life. And you ſhall hardly, in all the excurſions of poetry, find a paſſage in which a rational and ſentimental attachment is more charmingly and feelingly illuſtrated.

But happpy they! the happieſt of their kind!
Whom gentler ſtars unite, and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.
'Tis not the coarſer tie of human laws,
Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,
That binds their peace, but harmony itſelf,
Attuning all their paſſions into love;
Where friendſhip full-exerts her ſofteſt power,
Perfect eſteem enlivened by deſire
Ineffable, and ſympathy of ſoul;
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
With boundleſs confidence: for nought but love
Can anſwer love, and render bliſs ſecure.
Let him, ungenerous, who, alone intent
To bleſs himſelf, from ſordid parents buys
The loathing virgin, in eternal care,
Well-merited, conſume his nights and days:
Let barbarous nations, whoſe inhuman love
Is wild deſire, fierce as the ſuns they feel;
Let eaſtern tyrants, from the light of Heaven
Seclude their boſom-ſlaves, meanly poſſeſs'd
Of a meer, lifeleſs, violated form:
While thoſe whom love cements in holy faith,
And equal tranſport, free as Nature live,
Diſdaining fear. What is the world to them,
Its pomp, its pleaſure, and its nonſenſe all!
Who in each other claſp whatever fair

High

High fancy forms, and laviſh hearts can wiſh;
Something than beauty dearer, ſhould they look
Or on the mind, or mind-illumin'd face;
Truth, goodneſs, honour, harmony, and love,
The richeſt bounty of indulgent Heaven.
Meantime a ſmiling offſpring riſes round,
And mingles both their graces. By degrees,
The human bloſſom blows; and every day,
Soft as it rolls along, ſhews ſome new charm,
The father's luſtre, and the mother's bloom.
Then infant reaſon grows apace, and calls
For the kind hand of an aſſiduous care.
Delightful taſk! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to ſhoot,
To pour the freſh inſtruction o'er the mind,
To breathe th' enlivening ſpirit, and to fix
The generous purpoſe in the glowing breaſt.
Oh ſpeak the joy! ye, whom the ſudden tear
Surprizes often, while you look around,
And nothing ſtrikes your eye but ſights of bliſs,
All various Nature preſſing on the heart:
An elegant ſufficiency, content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendſhip, books,
Eaſe and alternate labour, uſeful life,
Progreſſive virtue, and approving Heaven.
Theſe are the matchleſs joys of virtuous love;
And thus their moments fly. The Seaſons thus,
As ceaſeleſs round a jarring world they roll,
Still find them happy; and conſenting Spring
Sheds her own roſy garland on their heads:
Till evening comes at laſt, ſerene and mild;
When after the long vernal day of life,

Enamour'd more, as more remembrance ſwells
With many a proof of recollected love,
Together down they ſink in ſocial ſleep;
Together freed, their gentle ſpirits fly
To ſcenes where love and bliſs immortal reign.

THE tranſition is equally proper and affecting, from the ſultry heats of ſummer to a thunder ſtorm, from the mildeſt to the moſt alarming and majeſtic ſcenes, that mark the Omnipotence of Nature. Here we behold the hemiſphere loaded with portentous clouds; the air teem with nitrous vapours; the face of Heaven deepen all round into one thick forboding aſpect; the winged tribes lower to the earth; the beaſts of the field, as if ſtunned by ſome inviſible power, ſtand and gaze in ſtupid terror; and all Nature, ſilent and penſive throughout, as if huſhed on purpoſe to heighten and ſolemnize the tempeſt. Then begin the clouds to let looſe their fiery contents; the forked lightnings twiſt and flaſh, and blaze about with a fearful and threatening velocity; the thunders growl horribly tremendous; the rains fall in torrents; a death-like calm enſues; the ſun peers through the watery ſky, and mankind mourn the mangled face of things.

IN Autumn too, while his Muſe, like the grateful huſbandman ſhe deſcribes, ſurveys, with a glad exulting heart, the envied riches of good old England, the liberal Genius of Induſtry, Commerce,

merce, Navigation, with all their ſiſter and attendant arts, ſtep forth and claim their ſhare in the patriotic ſong. At their approach ſhe exalts her voice, aſſumes a bolder note, and inſpired by the dignity of the ſubject, ſounds defiance to neighbouring nations.

How juſt and well timed, as well as claſſical and inſtructive, his apoſtrophe to the Heroes of antiquity, whoſe ſtory ſtill continues to be a fund of the richeſt erudition and delight, to all the lovers of ſcience, eſpecially in winter evenings. Often, as he adorns and enlivens his poem with ſtrictures on the feathered creation, he judiciouſly reſerves the ſocial *Red-breaſt*, till now, as the beſt opportunity of doing juſtice to his merit. There is ſomething ſo meaning and ſentimental, ſo very pictureſque and homely, in his account of this little well known popular bird, that you cannot but indulge the quotation.

The Red-breaſt, ſacred to the houſhold gods,
Wiſely regardful of th' embroiling ſky;
In joyleſs fields, and thorny thickets, leaves
His ſhivering mates, and pays to truſted man
His annual viſit. Half afraid, he firſt
Againſt the window beats; then briſk, alights
On the warm hearth; then hopping o'er the floor,
Eyes all the ſmiling family aſkance,
And pecks, and ſtarts, and wonders where he is.

THOMSON's imagination, is indeed, copious and fiery, but his judgment is alſo ſtrong and penetrating. He conceives and executes with a generous and glowing ardour; but is ſeldom or never the dupe of forced connections, or falſe reſemblances. His thoughts, which rarely expand around him, bear onward as it were in a ſtraight line, in ſo much, that all his collateral deſcriptions, like the branches of a tree, either ſpring ſpontaneouſly, or are grafted with inimitable grace, on whatever conſtitutes the leading burden of his ſong.

YOUNG, with a genius truly original and ſublime, is however perpetually ſtarting from his theme, and plunging into obſcurity, by graſping at ſomething foreign to his plan. Perhaps, we might have ſaid, at leaſt with equal propriety, that he writes without any ſettled plan at all. This, no doubt, gives his muſe ſufficient latitude, and often ſtartles his Reader, with the novelty of his tranſitions, and the richneſs of his ſentiments; but, much oftner diſguſts, with an obvious want of taſte and a manifeſt contempt of decorum. Thomſon is never abſent, where you wiſh to find him; never incoherent, never tawdry; never tempts the mind to wander from the leading idea to which he firſt excites her attention.

THUS all his Epiſodes are introduced with great and wonderful propriety. Here we have no over ſtraining,

ſtraining, nothing far-fetched, nothing lugged in at random, as an auxiliary ſerving with reluctanc- Wherever he carries you, it is nature all, genuine and uncorrupted throughout. No exotics are forced on your view. Every ſpot under the genial and propitious influence of his deſcriptive talents, abounds with its own productions.

In what a fine claſſical vein of ſentimental poetry does he cloſe his thunder ſcene, with the pathetic ſtory of Amelia's fate; who innocent and beautiful as ſhe was, expires by a ſtroke of lightning, in the very arms of her lover. Indeed, no poet ever traced the hidden workings of the finer affections more minutely than he did. Ah! what tender ſentiments will not genius produce when thus connected with a feeling heart. What a lively impreſſion does this affecting cataſtrophe leave on the ſympathetic mind? Theſe are ſtrokes of Nature which none but a maſter can draw.

——— Young Celadon
And his Amelia were a matchleſs pair;
With equal virtue form'd, and equal grace,
The ſame, diſtinguiſh'd by their ſex alone:
Hers the mild luſtre of the blooming morn,
And his the radiance of the riſen day.
They lov'd: but ſuch their guileleſs paſſion was,
As in the dawn of time inform'd the heart
Of innocence, and undiſſembling truth.
'Twas friendſhip heightened by the mutual wiſh,

Th'

Th' enchanting hope, and ſympathetic glow,
Beam'd from the mutual eye. Devoting all
To love, each was to each a dearer ſelf;
Supremely happy in th' awakened power
Of giving joy. Alone, amid the ſhades,
Still in harmonious intercourſe they liv'd
The rural day, and talk'd the flowing heart,
Or ſigh'd and look'd unutterable things.
So paſs'd their life, a clear united ſtream,
By care unruffled; till, in evil hour,
The tempeſt caught them on the tender walk,
Heedleſs how far, and where its mazes ſtray'd,
While, with each other bleſt, creative love
Still bade eternal Eden ſmile around.
Preſaging inſtant fate her boſom heav'd
Unwonted ſighs, and ſtealing oft a look
Of the big gloom on Celadon her eye
Fell tearful, wetting her diſordered cheek.
In vain aſſuring love, and confidence
In Heaven, repreſs'd her fear; it grew, and ſhook
Her frame near diſſolution. He perceiv'd
Th' unequal conflict, and as angels look
On dying ſaints, his eyes compaſſion ſhed,
With love illumin'd high. "Fear not, he ſaid,
"Sweet innocence! thou ſtranger to offence,
"And inward ſtorm! He, who yon ſkies involves
"In frowns of darkneſs, ever ſmiles on thee
"With kind regard. O'er thee the ſecret ſhaft
"That waſtes at midnight, or th' undreaded hour
"Of noon, flies harmleſs: and that very voice,
"Which thunders terror thro' the guilty heart,
"With tongues of ſeraphs whiſpers peace to thine.

"'Tis

" 'Tis ſafety to be near thee ſure, and thus
" To claſp perfection !" From his void embrace,
Myſterious Heaven ! that moment, to the ground,
A blackened corſe, was ſtruck the beauteous maid.
But who can paint the lover, as he ſtood,
Pierc'd by ſevere amazement, hating life,
Speechleſs, and fix'd in all the death of woe !
So, faint reſemblance ! on the marble tomb,
The well-diſſembled mourner ſtooping ſtands,
For ever ſilent, and for ever ſad.

His deſcription of the rural bath, and the incident it ſuggeſts, are natural and intereſting. The fortunate diſcovery of Damon on that occaſion, the proof he gives in his modeſty and diffidence, of a chaſte and reſpectful attachment, and the generous acknowledgment of his baſhful miſtreſs, are touched with inimitable delicacy and tenderneſs. There is, in the whole Epiſode, ſuch a beautiful aſſemblage of the moſt luxuriant images, yet couched in a language ſo peculiarly inoffenſive and expreſſive; the ſcene is wrought up with ſo much nature and novelty, with ſo many incidents and emotions; and the unaffected dignity of the tender paſſion, is ſo well ſupported in all its ancient and rural energy and ſimplicity, that my Readers, whether old or young, though dead to all the delicacies of taſte, if not alſo dead to the genuine workings of two virtuous and ſentimental hearts, thus

ſmitten

ſmitten with a mutual flame, cannot but be pleaſed with a peruſal of the paſſage entire.

Cloſe in the covert of an hazel copſe,
Where winded into pleaſing ſolitudes
Runs out the rambling dale, young Damon ſat,
Penſive, and pierc'd with love's delightful pangs.
There to the ſtream that down the diſtant rocks
Hoarſe murmuring fell, and plaintive breeze that play'd
Among the bending willows, falſely he
Of Muſidora's cruelty complain'd.
She felt his flame; but deep within her breaſt,
In baſhful coyneſs, or in maiden pride,
The ſoft return conceal'd: ſave when it ſtole
In ſide-long glances from her downcaſt eye,
Or from her ſwelling ſoul in ſtifled ſighs.
Touch'd by the ſcene, no ſtranger to his vows,
He fram'd a melting lay, to try her heart:
And, if an infant paſſion ſtruggled there,
To call that paſſion forth. Thrice happy ſwain!
A lucky chance, that oft decides the fate
Of mighty monarchs, then decided thine.
For lo! conducted by the laughing loves,
This cool retreat his Muſidora ſought:
Warm in her cheek the ſultry ſeaſon glow'd;
And rob'd in looſe array, ſhe came to bathe
Her fervent limbs in the refreſhing ſtream.
What ſhall he do? In ſweet confuſion loſt,
And dubious flutterings, he a while remain'd:
A pure ingenuous elegance of ſoul,
A delicate refinement, known to few,

Perplex'd

Perplex'd his breaſt, and urg'd him to retire:
But love forbade. Ye prudes in virtue, ſay,
Say, ye ſevereſt, what would you have done?
Meantime, this fairer nymph than ever bleſt
Arcadian ſtream, with timid eye around
The banks ſurveying, ſtripp'd her beauteous limbs,
To taſte the lucid coolneſs of the flood.
Ah then! not Paris on the piny top
Of Ida panted ſtronger, when aſide
The rival goddeſſes the veil divine
Caſt unconfin'd, and gave him all their charms,
Than, Damon, thou; as from the ſnowy leg,
And ſlender foot, th' inverted ſilk ſhe drew;
As the ſoft touch diſſolv'd the virgin zone;
And, thro' the parting robe, th' alternate breaſt,
With youth wild-throbbing, on thy lawleſs gaze
In full luxuriance roſe. But, deſperate youth,
How durſt thou riſque the ſoul-diſtracting view;
As from her naked limbs, of glowing white,
Harmonious ſwell'd by nature's fineſt hand,
In folds looſe-floating fell the fainter lawn;
And fair-expos'd ſhe ſtood, ſhrunk from herſelf,
With fancy bluſhing, at the doubtful breeze
Alarm'd, and ſtarting like the fearful fawn?
Then to the flood ſhe ruſh'd; the parted flood
Its lovely gueſt with cloſing waves receiv'd;
And every beauty ſoftening, every grace
Fluſhing anew, a mellow luſtre ſhed:
As ſhines the lily thro' the cryſtal mild;
Or as the roſe amid the morning dew,
Freſh from Aurora's hand, more ſweetly glows.

While

While thus ſhe wanton'd, now beneath the wave
But ill-conceal'd; and now with ſtreaming locks,
That half-embrac'd her in a humid veil,
Riſing again, the latent Damon drew
Such madning draughts of beauty to the ſoul,
As for a while o'erwhelm'd his raptur'd thought
With luxury too daring. Check'd, at laſt,
By love's reſpectful modeſty, he deem'd
The theft profane, if aught profane to love
Can e'er be deem'd; and ſtruggling from the ſhade,
With headlong hurry fled: but firſt theſe lines,
Trac'd by his ready pencil, on the bank
With trembling hand he threw. "Bathe on, my fair,
"Yet unbeheld ſave by the ſacred eye
"Of faithful love: I go to guard thy haunt,
"To keep from thy receſs each vagrant foot,
"And each licentious eye." With wild ſurpriſe,
As if to marble ſtruck, devoid of ſenſe,
A ſtupid moment motionleſs ſhe ſtood:
So ſtands the ſtatue that enchants the world,
So bending tries to veil the matchleſs boaſt,
The mingled beauties of exulting Greece.
Recovering, ſwift ſhe flew to find thoſe robes
Which bliſsful Eden knew not; and, array'd
In careleſs haſte, th' alarming paper ſnatch'd.
But, when her Damon's well known hand ſhe ſaw,
Her terrors vaniſhed, and a ſofter train
Of mixt emotions, hard to be deſcrib'd,
Her ſudden boſom ſeiz'd: ſhame void of guilt,
The charming bluſh of innocence, eſteem
And admiration of her lover's flame,

By

By modeſty exalted: even a ſenſe
Of ſelf approving beauty ſtole acroſs
Her buſy thought. At length a tender calm
Huſh'd by degrees the tumult of her ſoul;
And on the ſpreading beech, that o'er the ſtream
Incumbent hung, ſhe with the ſilvan pen
Of rural lovers this confeſſion carv'd,
Which ſoon her Damon kiſs'd with weeping joy:
" Dear youth! ſole judge of what theſe verſes mean,
" By fortune too much favour'd, but by love,
" Alas! not favour'd leſs, be ſtill as now
" Diſcreet: the time may come you need not fly."

But the well known ſtory of Palemon and Lavinia, does equal honour to the warmth of his heart, and the juſtneſs of his taſte. As he intends it for a panegyric on Benevolence and Humanity, the introduction of it here, is happy and ſtriking. For it follows an exhortation which he urges with an earneſtneſs that marks the good man, not leſs than it does the true poet.

Be not too narrow, huſbandmen! but fling
From the full ſheaf, with charitable ſtealth,
The liberal handful. Think, oh grateful think!
How good the God of harveſt is to you;
Who pours abundance o'er your flowing fields;
While theſe unhappy partners of your kind
Wide hover round you, like the fowls of heaven,
And aſk their humble dole. The various turns

Of

Of fortune ponder; that your ſons may want
What now, with hard reluctance, faint, ye give.

THE ſtory of the man periſhing in ſnow, is to ſay the leaſt, finely and feelingly told. This accident, is the more natural and affecting, that it happens ſo frequently among thoſe wild romantic hills and deſarts in the South of Scotland, where our poet was born. There we have but few beaten tracks, and only mere foot-paths, through the fields, from one houſe to another; which by the way, are often ſingle, and ſituated at a moſt uncomfortable and inconvenient diſtance. Trees, which mark the face of the country beſt, in the time of ſnow; you, who have read Johnſon's ſnarling remarks, muſt be ſenſible are but rare; and it muſt be confeſſed, there are no hedges at all, as here *, lining our publick roads. So that, to travel without a truſty guide, through ſuch a country, in ſuch circumſtances, where every thing dazzles and confounds the ſight, and where the general aſpect of nature is ſo totally diſguiſed, to a ſtranger at leaſt, is certain deſtruction.

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* The writer compoſed this part of the work, about thirty miles from London; in the vicinity of an extenſive heath, ſurrounded with ſeveral large and full grown woods.

As

As thus the ſnows ariſe; and foul, and fierce,
All winter drives along the darkened air;
In his own looſe revolving fields, the ſwain
Diſaſter'd ſtands; ſees other hills aſcend,
Of unknown joyleſs brow: and other ſcenes,
Of horrid proſpect, ſhag the trackleſs plain:
Nor finds the river, nor the foreſt, hid
Beneath the formleſs wild; but wanders on
From hill to dale, ſtill more and more aſtray;
Impatient flouncing thro' the drifted heaps,
Stung with the thoughts of home; the thoughts of home
Ruſh on his nerves, and call their vigour forth
In many a vain attempt. How ſinks his ſoul!
What black deſpair, what horror fills his heart!
When for the duſky ſpot, which fancy feign'd
His tufted cottage riſing thro' the ſnow,
He meets the roughneſs of the middle waſte,
Far from the track, and bleſt abode of man;
While round him night reſiſtleſs cloſes faſt,
And every tempeſt, howling o'er his head,
Renders the ſavage wilderneſs more wild.
Then throng the buſhy ſhapes into his mind,
Of cover'd pits, unfathomably deep,
A dire deſcent! beyond the power of froſt;
Of faithleſs bogs; of precipices huge,
Smooth'd up with ſnow; and, and what is land, unknown,
What water of the ſtill unfrozen ſpring,
In the looſe marſh or ſolitary lake,
Where the freſh fountain from the bottom boils.
Theſe check his fearful ſteps; and down he ſinks
Beneath the ſhelter of the ſhapeleſs drift,

Thinking o'er all the bitterneſs of death,
Mix'd with the tender anguiſh nature ſhoots
Thro' the wrung boſom of the dying man,
His wife, his children, and his friends unſeen.
In vain for him th' officious wife prepares
The fire fair blazing, and the veſtment warm;
In vain his little children, peeping out
Into the mingling ſtorm, demand their fire,
With tears of artleſs innocence. Alas!
Nor wife, nor children, more ſhall he behold,
Nor friends, nor ſacred home. On every nerve
The deadly winter ſeizes; ſhuts up ſenſe;
And, o'er his inmoſt vitals creeping cold,
Lays him along the ſnows, a ſtiffened corſe,
Stretched out, and bleaching in the northern blaſt.

It has often ſtruck me, that on a ſubject ſo trite, where poets and orators, of all kingdoms, periods, and kinds, have ſo frequently indulged and gratified their talents of deſcription, Thomſon ſhould find, notwithſtanding, ſo much new matter, and ſo many original ſentiments. It confirms me in an opinion, I have long entertained, in common, perhaps, with every one who thinks on the ſubject, that nature appears uniformly the ſame to none of us; that every mind has ſomething diſtinguiſhing in its ſtructure and operations, from another, and, that we have all our own way of thinking, whenever we do think, and drop it only, in a ſlaviſh imitation of others. Our poet never indulges common-place remark, or wiſhes to make a profuſion of ſplendid phraſes com-

compenſate the want of ideas. He dictates invariably from his own ſenſations, and his *Seaſons* is a faithful copy of all thoſe various feelings, which the various appearances of the year unavoidably occaſion, in minds poliſhed by the pureſt taſte, and exalted by the beſt philoſophy. This, preſerves him equally from all extremes. The great outlines of his plan, continue unbroken throughout. Nor, are the intermediate parts, in the leaſt overloaded, diſgraced, or debilitated, by adſcitious or extra materials. And, he no where, either ſoars above his Reader's intelligence, or ſtruggles with an ill-mannered officiouſneſs to eſtabliſh an acquaintance between them, and things beneath their concern.

SECT. II.

BUT, juſt arrangement is not the only thing eſſential to maſterly deſcription. Objects in poetry, as well as in painting, ſhould exhibit their natural and reſpective characters, at the ſame time, they occupy, their natural and reſpective poſitions. This maxim, if a juſt one, is methinks ſingly ſufficient, to place the deſcriptive genius of Thomſon in the moſt advantageous point of view.

WANT of real diſcrimination, is the great defect which runs through the paltry poetry of the times, which degrades, indeed, all ſorts of compoſition

alike; and which is the true ſtamp, by which the moſt genuine offspring of dulneſs, are every where known and diſtinguiſhed. Ordinary minds are ſeldom ſtruck with any thing, becauſe they never think of particularizing either what they ſee, or feel. The aſſociation of ideas, is to them no object at all; or, at leaſt, but an indiviſible one. And all the little pother and fuſs they make, through the various departments they fill, and the multiplicity of ſhapes they aſſume, is but an echo, which dies with the ſound that begets, or the ſituation that occaſions it. A real *Genius* never reſts in generals, never runs in a circle: but, like the melted wax, gives in vivid and glowing characters, the identical impreſſion it receives. Such was Thomſon. He preſents us not with ſcenes, which others only have ſeen, or endeavours to intereſt his reader's in a tale, which he has merely from report. No; he relates nothing but what he felt, and ſaw, and examined, with an ardent and indefatigable curioſity. And he poſſeſſes the ſingular talent of hitting the very feature, by which things of the greateſt reſemblance, of the neareſt likeneſs, are yet known to be eſſentially diſtinct.

Whoever knows from experience, how diſtinctly the objects of vallies appear from the ſummit of lofty mountains; muſt regret, that this country with all its richneſs and variety, affords ſo few magnificent and pictureſque proſpects.

Where-

Wherever we look around us, groups of things ſeem huddled together, in one vaſt undiſtinguiſhable maſs! Our views are almoſt every where imperfect, becauſe being ſo much on a level with the objects; they are generally horizontal. And while the interſtitial ſpaces are hid, the relation and dependence of objects, which often conſtitute their moſt beautiful characteriſtics, are totally ſhaded. In all champaign countries, however variegated with woods, and fields, and meadows; large rivers, little ſtreams, flowery parterres, groves, gardens, glebes, villas, and hamlets innumerable; there is really no extenſive, no delightful proſpect. The eye is bewildered, and wanders unſettled, amidſt a vaſt croud of things which diſtract her attention. The banks of a river, though embroidered with all the luxuriance of nature, in her gayeſt forms, are never ſeen at any convenient diſtance. Now all our ſenſes occupy a certain medium, beyond which their functions are proportionably defective. And, we may be ſometimes too nigh, as well as too diſtant. In the ſituation ſuppoſed, we diſcern all things in the groſs, nothing by itſelf. Proximate objects then ſtrike us only in profile, and hide part of themſelves, as well as throw the whole back ground, into one impenetrable ſhade. Not a peep of the waters ever ſtrike us, through the brakes of the woods, and the richeſt fields, are every where buried, among the hedges and trees that line them.

The whole appears, till you plunge in the midſt of them, an impaſſible thicket, and inceſſantly fills the mind with all thoſe ideas of ſolitude and danger, ſo inſeparable from the foreſts of uninhabited countries.

Thomson never diſcloſes a fine proſpect, without exalting the ſpectator to an eminence ſufficiently elevated for commanding and taking in the whole. Here we are not only charmed with the graceful diſpoſition of parts, with that large and regular ſcale, with thoſe maſterly and majeſtic proportions, which nature obſerves in her moſt careleſs ſketches; but the relative propriety, and local, as well as inherent beauties of the minuteſt thing, are diſtinctly recognized, if not ſenſibly felt.

The *Seaſons* abound in deſcriptions, where the objects which occupy the ſeveral ſcenes, are ſpecifically enumerated; not ſeparately, as in a ſtate of disjunction, but as poſſeſſing certain relative connections, as partly dependant on each other, as conſtituent particulars of one whole; as contributing their reſpective ſhares, in producing the general effect.

With what maſterly minuteneſs does he paint the vernal ſhower, and diſtinguiſh the genial rains of ſpring, from the chearleſs and plaſhy floods of winter.

The north-eaſt ſpends his rage; he now ſhut up
Within his iron cave, th' effuſive ſouth
Warms the wide air, and o'er the void of heaven
Breathes the big clouds with vernal ſhowers diſtent.
At firſt a duſky wreath they ſeem to riſe,
Scarce ſtaining either; but by ſwift degrees,
In heaps on heaps, the doubling vapour fails
Along the loaded ſky, and mingling deep
Sits on th' horizon round a ſettled gloom:
Not ſuch as wintry-ſtorms on mortals ſhed,
Oppreſſing life; but lovely, gentle, kind,
And full of every hope and every joy,
The wiſh of nature. Gradual ſinks the breeze
Into a perfect calm; that not a breath
Is heard to quiver thro' the cloſing woods,
Or ruſtling turn the many-twinkling leaves
Of aſpin tall. Th' uncurling floods, diffus'd
In glaſſy breadth, ſeem thro' deluſive lapſe
Forgetful of their courſe. 'Tis ſilence all,
And pleaſing expectation. Herds and flocks
Drop the dry ſprig, and mute-imploring eye
The falling verdure. Huſh'd in ſhort ſuſpenſe,
The plumy people ſtreak their wings with oil,
To throw the lucid moiſture trickling off;
And wait th' approaching ſign to ſtrike, at once,
Into the general choir. Even mountains, vales,
And foreſts ſeem, impatient, to demand
The promiſed ſweetneſs. Man ſuperior walks
Amid the glad creation, muſing praiſe,
And looking lively gratitude. At laſt,
The clouds conſign their treaſures to the fields;
And, ſoftly ſhaking on the dimpled pool

Preluſive drops, let all their moiſture flow,
In large effuſion, o'er the freſhened world.
The ſtealing ſhower is ſcarce to patter heard,
By ſuch as wander thro' the foreſt walks,
Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves.
But who can hold the ſhade, while heaven deſcends
In univerſal bounty, ſhedding herbs,
And fruits, and flowers, on nature's ample lap?
Swift fancy fir'd anticipates their growth;
And, while the milky nutriment diſtils,
Beholds the kindling country colour round.

Perhaps, the moſt ſtriking and characteriſtic circumſtance in this deſcription, is the conſcious hilarity of the human mind. For, after making you a ſpectator of all nature, in a ſtate of wiſtful expectation for the reviving nutriment of heaven, he brings forth the Lord of this lower world, in that ſort of majeſty which beſt becomes him. The idea can never be too often repeated, and deſerves the recollection and approbation of every generous and worthy mind.

—— Man ſuperior walks
Amid the glad creation, muſing praiſe
And looking lively gratitude.

His Summer in particular, is crouded with beautiful delineations of every rural kind. Cows milking, ſheep ſhearing, hay making, are ſcenes which he deſcribes at length, and with a ſtriking exactneſs.

neſs. No ſight can be more natural than the herds and flocks, which he figures lolling on the bank of a ſtream, and panting under the noon-tide blaze. The lounging poſture of their keeper, is thus beautifully ſpecified:

——— Amid his ſubjects ſafe
Slumbers the monarch ſwain, his careleſs arms
Thrown round his head, on downy moſs ſuſtained;
Here, laid his ſcrip with wholeſome viands fill'd,
There liſt'ning every noiſe, his watchful dog.

The harveſt ſcene is alſo well deciphered. Here we find the reapers begin with the dawning day, their hardy toil, we ſee them all in motion; in four lines we learn the ſubject, the manner, and happy effects of their ruſtic converſation.

——Through their cheerful band, the rural talk,
The rural ſcandal, and the rural jeſt,
Fly harmleſs, to deceive the tedious time,
And ſteal unfelt, the ſultry hours away.

The maſter of the yielding field is pointed out by his taſk of diſtinction, his brooding mind, and his ſwelling heart. Nay, that nothing may be wanting to realize and finiſh the deſign, we are told,

The gleaners ſpread around, and here and there,
Spike after ſpike, their ſcanty harveſt pick.

NOTHING can be drawn more from nature than his approaches of winter. There is not a feature in the whole piece, which correſponds not with our feelings, on that diſmal and diſpiriting occaſion. Then do we find yon ſun ſickening apace, and like expiring life reſigning that ſyſtem he once animated, to darkneſs and death. The following lines contain an aſſemblage of the blackeſt and moſt diſtreſſing images; and they ſtrike us the more forcibly in deſcription, that we know them to be ſo univerſally and ſadly realiſed in life.

Meantime, in ſable cincture, ſhadows vaſt,
Deep ting'd and damp, and congregated clouds,
And all the vapoury turbulence of heaven
Involve the face of things.

UNDER the ſtern dominion of this rigid and dreary ſeaſon, all nature is contemplated as in a ſtate of petrifaction or inſenſibility. It is added with a force and propriety, which the experience of every individual juſtifies.

The ſoul of man dies in him, loathing life,
And black with more than melancholy views.

SECT.

SECT. II.

THE juſtneſs of Thomſon's deſcriptions has been greatly and univerſally admired. This was the laſt particular, under which we propoſed to arrange our general remarks on the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of the *Seaſons;* and which, we preſume, may be called with ſome propriety, in the ſtyle of painting, *colouring from nature.*

There is, we all know, an obvious quality in bodies of every kind, by which the light in which we ſee them affect our organs of ſight in ſuch a manner as to produce ſenſations equally varied and diſtinct. This quality they derive, in common with all others, from that original and independent Being, who is himſelf the ſoul and beauty of every thing amiable in what he has made. What is univerſal nature, but the great and living organ, by which he operates on his creatures, by which he is known to them, and by which, in a peculiar manner, humanity is exalted into an immediate correſpondence with Divinity.

THE platonic ſyſtem of thinking, at leaſt, teaches, that all kinds of beauty are congenial. Thus, for example, the peculiar lovelineſs of the feminine form, according to that philoſophy, is but the mere exterior of internal excellence. To adopt a ſentiment ſo much exploded and reprobated as this,

this, may now be thought laughable enough. Little minds have long been famous for making themſelves merry, with what they do not underſtand. In every compariſon of the ſexes, an appeal is implicitly made to fact, and they are either ſtrangely inattentive to the great maſter ſprings of active life, or know little of the world, who do not the Ladies the juſtice to own, that if, in ſome inſtances, we ſhow the ſtrongeſt heads, they uniformly diſcover the beſt hearts.* Now, if the moral powers of

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* I am aware, how extremely abſurd this idea may appear to ſome ſort of readers. Let it not be imagined, however, that I mean to compliment one ſex at the expence of another. I believe it will be found, in general, that the human heart is nearly the ſame in both. But are not all our natural and beſt feelings, much more liable to be ſuppreſſed or ſupplanted by artificial ones, than theirs? I ſpeak not to you, whoſe ſole correſpondence is with the moſt worthleſs and contemptible of all wretches.

——— Of God above, or man below,
What can we reaſon, but from what we know.

Your judgment muſt be guided wholly by your own experience; though methinks it not a little hard, that thoſe who owe their depravity and profligacy intirely to yours, ſhould alſo be reproached by the authors of their ruin. The worſt of beings can do nothing more, than torture and torment. Let others blame the miſerable

the mind, affect the body more eſſentially and thoroughly than the ſpeculative; and if theirs ope-

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miſerable partners of your guilt as they will, the ſingle reflection, that their firſt deviations from innocence muſt originate from you, ought certainly to inſpire you with ſentiments of tenderneſs and remorſe, rather than with thoſe of inſolence and inſult. But, ill as it does become you, whatever cenſures you are pleaſed to inflict on ſuch as are reduced to the ſad and ſhameful neceſſity of daily ſacrificing their all at the ſhrine of public infamy, is it fair to involve the whole in one general, ungenerous and malignant opprobrium? Indeed your ſatire is the beſt eulogy they can receive. For my own part, I ſhould think her virtue ſuſpicious who ſhared your commendation. I am ſure, it could not fail of putting every modeſt woman to the bluſh. Know, moreover, that you have no title either to think or ſpeak on their ſubject. There is ſomething about them, much too ſacred, as well for the groſs ſenſations of unprincipled hearts, as for the unhallowed ſallies of intemperate tongues.

It is always a deciſive mark of true worth, to be moſt liked by thoſe, to whom, we are beſt known. Ye beloved few, who have long poſſeſſed every corner of my heart, continue to repay my attachment with equal affection and fidelity, and I forego, with all the apathy and good humour of a Stoick, the poor periſhing *pageantry* of popular applauſe. What is the *whiffling of a name*, but the dull repetition of an echo, which dies on the memory as it does on the ear, and *leaves not a wreck behind.*

All

rate, though, perhaps, with leſs vigour, yet with more regularity, ſweetneſs and delicacy, on Plato's

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All ideas of character, not reſulting from perſonal conviction, have a tendency to miſlead. Ignorance and prejudice fabricate monſters. On a ſubject ſo delicate, experience alone can inſtruct with certainty. The beſt women, generally ſhew the leaſt inclination to extend the circle of their acquaintance. Nor can we, any where elſe, learn what they are, for they are no where elſe known.

The charge of treachery ſo often exchanged between the ſexes, falls on us, I am afraid, with much greater weight than it does on them. At leaſt, they are not naturally perfidious. Tis art that makes them coquettes, and coquettes that makes them traitors. As ſure as you find a woman choked with prudery and affectation, ſo ſure is ſhe deſtitute of all principle and worth. But I appeal to every perſon, who has the leaſt regard for taſte and decency, who has not loſt all reliſh for the happineſs that ſprings from the chaſte ſenſibilities of an unpolluted heart, whether he has not ſuffered a thouſand times more exquiſitely, from the pitiful peeviſhneſs, and unrelenting antipathy of his own, than from any fickleneſs or levity he has found in the other ſex? Indeed, the preſent ſituation of both, in this country at leaſt, renders it impoſſible to be otherwiſe. The maſculine character is peculiarly obnoxious to the petrifying influence of vulgar opinion. The young men of the age, are ſoon intoxicated with the fallacious maxims, either of the gay or the buſy world. And both

hypotheſis, their exterior, as we find it, muſt unavoidably be much more amiable and elegant than

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both extremes are equally pernicious to ſocial excellence. Ideas of the moſt ſelfiſh and engroſſing tendency, abſorb their minds, at a very early period, and render them, ever after, criminally callous to the workings of humanity. With a ſtrong predelection for wealth, independence or libertiniſm, they cheerfully proſtitute all the powers of their minds, and all the feelings of their hearts, in acquiring one, or either, or all of theſe objects. This, unavoidably plunges them into all the machinations of pride, all the intrigues of gallantry, all the intricacies, toils and viciſſitudes of buſineſs. From that moment, ſentiment loſes its weight, and ſenſibility its edge; intereſt triumphs in the abſence of principle, and Nature relinquiſhes her dominion to Art.

The original principles and diſpoſitions of the female mind, ſeldom undergo ſuch a total revolution. Nor do women ever diſcover any great profligacy of heart, till they have forfeited all credit with the world. Apart from a few of the moſt perverſe and unrelenting tempers, thoſe of them, who are not flagrantly vicious, are ſeldom inſincere. Their attachments, which conſtitute the moſt comfortable circumſtance in domeſtic life, when innocent and undiſſembled, are much more laſting and fervent than ours. In ſhort, as the world now goes, it is a thouſand times more dangerous to truſt a man than a woman of reputation.

I offer

ours. Indeed, the moſt graceful of all attitudes and motions, are thoſe, to which true delicacy, in feeling and thinking, give birth. Others, awkward and diſtorted as they are, and though, at beſt, but a ſpecies of the dulleſt mimickry, like glaring colours of every kind, may ſet the vulgar a gaping, becauſe their minds are ſtill rude and uninformed, and becauſe their taſtes have not acquired that fine edge, without which reality can but ſeldom be diſcriminated from mere ſemblance. Expreſſions of pure mind only reach the heart. Nor is the heart in a tone for recognizing theſe, with ſuitable affections, when either drenched in luxury, torpid in ruſticity, or ſunk in ceremony.

Through all the departments of ſociety, only notice, how inſtantaneouſly and inſenſibly, tempers, impregnated with ſimilar fires, ſelect, diſtinguiſh and mingle with one another. A ſudden impulſe, like ſome magic charm, operates almoſt inconſciouſly, and cements their affections in a

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I offer no other apology for this long note, than that it refers to an inſtance of general depravity, which threatens the deſtruction of every thing for which a wiſe man could wiſh to live. For the preſent faſhionable clamour, againſt the reality of female worth, which is a natural conſequence of national effeminacy, is not more repugnant to the principles of the *fineſt taſte*, than to thoſe of the *pureſt morality*.

moment.

moment. By a certain myſterious ſympathy, which ſometimes commences and becomes mutual at firſt ſight, they ſeem to read and explore one another's ſouls, and exchange, with ſecret ſatisfaction, the ſilent but inexpreſſible endearments of a heart-felt eſteem. In ſuch minds, how wonderfully ſtrong, how amiably operative the powers and virtues of humanity? The many melting and querelous vibrations of diſtreſs, which mark the different ſtages of mortality, touch them more intenſely than others; and they alone ſeem acquainted with that mute ſort of language; in which, ſentiment is ſo evidently ſuperior, to all verbal utterance. Yes! the far-fetched heavings of an oppreſſed and overloaded heart, ſet theirs a bleeding at every pore. A mortified and dejected countenance, affects them more deeply than a thouſand tongues. The moping aſpect, the long and wan viſage, the eye that rolls inconſolable, and ſeems exhauſted with weeping, the deepening ſigh, the heſitating voice, the open mouth, the pale and trembling lips, the drooping head and penſive look, are to them more ſtriking and tender, than all that words can expreſs.

Why are the deſcriptions of ancient, ſo vaſtly ſuperior to thoſe of modern poetry? Why, with all our boaſted acquiſitions of literature and ſcience, do we ſtill yield to theſe maſters of the human heart, in Painting, Sculpture, Statuary, and every

art that reſpects internal character, its influence on human affairs, and the whole machinery of life? One reaſon, among others, may be, that the popularity of this philoſophy diſpoſed them to deal more in tracing effects to their cauſes, than we do, and made the intricate workings of the mind and paſſions the ſole object of their attention, and the great ſubject of their moſt intereſting and elaborate delineations. And does not our late incomparable Actor, whom ſo many have ſeen with ſuch inexpreſſible delight, owe moſt of his excellence and ſucceſs, to that happy flexibility in his organs, by which we could trace the various movements of his mind, as minutely and diſtinctly as he felt them?

Pardon this intruſion, ye generous Lovers of Nature. May her faireſt and ſweeteſt forms be ever propitious to your hallowed haunts. But know ye not, that you tread on ſacred ground? that all yon aſſemblage of colours, which float on your ſight; and all yon dulcet ſounds, which greet your ears, are material and viſible ſignatures of an immaterial and inviſible prineiple? Nay, what are all the various charms, of which you are ſo much and ſo juſtly enamoured, but pure emanations of Divinity? To him the human form owes all its delicacy, dignity, proportion and comelineſs. He repleniſhed our heads with ideas, and our hearts with ſentiments. From him the Earth derives all her

her garniture and riches; Nature all her beauteous perfections; the Sun all his radiance and luſtre; and the Heavens all their ſplendour and magnificence! Whatever, indeed, fills and raviſhes the heart with extacy, is an obvious and ſtriking feature of ſupreme goodneſs. And well can the contemplative and moralizing mind, trace the living and plaſtic energy of this ſublime incomprehenſible Being, through all the delicate and diſcriminating hues of ſenſitive, as well as through all the ſympathies, ſenſibilities and attachments of animated and rational Nature.

HERE then is a key to that peculiar art of deſcription, for which the genius of Thomſon was ſo happily adapted. The multifarious phenomena of the year, ſtruck him as ſo many different means, by which the great Father of the univerſe, promotes the happineſs, and ſmiles benignant on the glad creation. With what propriety, for example, does he conclude his addreſs to the Sun! How elegant and natural the tranſition from that glorious luminary to the great Origin of light and life, of comfort and joy to all beings and all worlds! We are loſt in the pleaſing but awful ſublimity, to which we find our hearts exalted, by ſtrains ſo conſonant to the rational raptures of devotional minds.

How ſhall I then attempt to ſing of Him!
Who, Light Himſelf, in uncreated light
Inveſted deep, dwells awfully retir'd
From mortal eye, or angel's purer ken;
Whoſe ſingle ſmile has, from the firſt of time,
Fill'd, overflowing, all thoſe lamps of Heaven,
That beam for ever thro' the boundleſs ſky:
But, ſhould he hide his face, th' aſtoniſh'd ſun,
And all th' extinguiſh'd ſtars, would looſening reel
Wide from their ſpheres, and Chaos come again.
And yet was every faultering tongue of Man,
Almighty Father! ſilent in thy praiſe?
Thy Works themſelves would raiſe a general voice,
Even in the depth of ſolitary woods
By human foot untrod; proclaim thy power,
And to the quire celeſtial Thee reſound,
Th' eternal cauſe, ſupport, and end of all!

Thus, under the influence of a conviction, at once ſo affecting and ſublime, he ſeizes, wherever his fancy roams, the identical circumſtance, in all its variety of combinations, which ſtrikes the deepeſt and pleaſes the moſt.

The ſlighteſt ſtrokes of Thomſon's pencil, are accordingly diſcriminating and pictureſque. This was the more difficult a taſk, that moſt of what he deſcribes are the daily ſubjects of common obſervation. And no ordinary powers are requiſite, to beſtow ſuch colouring, ſuch daſhes and charms on common objects, as ſhall render them attractive. Yet his ſtrictures are never vague, never trite, never

ver low. Familiar as many of his thoughts and ideas are to the bulk of his readers, what a wonderful air of novelty and grace tinctures and runs through almoſt every paſſage in his poem. He copied nothing but virgin Nature, and his copy is, throughout, a moſt faithful and exact one. The living original is always at hand, and he never wiſhes to be tried by any other teſt. He took the proſpects he gives with his own eye, and happily realizes every thing he relates. His deſcriptions, therefore, not only pleaſe thoſe of the chaſteſt taſte, but ſtrangely affect and intereſt every good and feeling heart.

With what delicate and maſterly ſtrokes, does he frequently touch and diſcriminate, the various tints, which diverſify and embelliſh the flowery lawn. How juſtly and nicely has he every where diſtinguiſhed and traced the multiplied ſhades, which in the beauteous varniſh, and chaſte embroidery of Nature, runs ſo gradually and imperceptibly into one another. He ſeems particularly ambitious, on all occaſions, to produce the ſame ſenſations in his readers, which the ſcenes he exhibits naturally do in their original ſtate. This you muſt allow is a ſtandard ſufficiently deciſive. For a ſimilar effect can only take place by the influence of a ſimilar cauſe. And in what ſituation, in what ſcene, does he not ſucceed, in this reſpect, to admiration. His *Winter* and *Spring*, for example,

are crouded with a train of the moſt pleaſing images, but of a moſt oppoſite complexion and tendency, glow ſo intenſely with the peculiar characteriſtics and colouring of each; that in reading the one, the mind is tinged with ſuch a deep and ſanguine melancholy, as nothing can relieve her from ſo readily and effectually, perhaps, as a frequent and feeling peruſal of the other.

We ſhall have occaſion, as we proceed, to obſerve more fully, with what attention to this circumſtance he manages every part of his ſubject. Examples of his breathing, as it were, the very language, and aſſuming the very form of nature, are innumerable. How many of his objects and ſcenes, appear as ſhaggy and bleak, as groteſque and rugged, as the wildeſt and moſt romantic imagination could wiſh. Theſe however, he purpoſely ſelects and accommodates, chiefly as contraſts, to heighten the pleaſure which ariſes from more amiable and engaging proſpects. And with what an eaſy and graceful felicity, has he evety where catched the intermingling hues, which dance in ſuch a pleaſing and pictureſque variety on the raviſhed eye; with what a fine collection of the ſweeteſt colours, diverſified every landſcape he delineates; with what ſignificant and appoſite epithets, marked the fragrant effluvia which perfume the air, wherever the odoriferous tribes abound.

Nor

Nor is it ſtraining the metaphor unreaſonably, to obſerve, that the ſame exquiſite colouring which prevails in his natural, diſtinguiſhes alſo his moral painting. And in the one, he is juſt as great a maſter, as in the other. His reflections, which the ſubject always ſuggeſts, are only propoſed in the language of friendſhip, not announced with an air of authority. He never uſes the didactic ſtyle, never runs into the garulity of the pulpit, never preaches, never deals in ſatire, never diſcovers either a rigid mind, or a narrow heart. Intimately acquainted with human nature, and the numberleſs ſenſations we recognize, in almoſt every circumſtance, the very tone of his ſentiments, and the ſtructure of his thoughts, generally ſet the minds of his readers a moralizing. So that in every ſolitary track through which he leads us, we are ſomehow diſpoſed to expect ſome uſeful or affecting hint before we leave it; and are ſeldom or never diſappointed.

No artiſt ever executed well, who was not previouſly ſenſible of the difficulties he had to encounter. The human mind never appears ſo truly great and independant, never diſcovers her innate majeſty and might ſo fully, as when grappling with extremity. Indiſpenſable neceſſity alone, rouſes imagination, and prompts her to put forth all her ſtrength. On ſuch occaſions ſhe generally reaches a ſublimity, to which, in no other circumſtance ſhe

is equal. How tenderly and emphatically does our poet deplore, his utter inability to rival the finely variegated drapery of Nature! He, nevertheleſs, attempts it with unexampled and unexpected ſucceſs. Genius often takes her expanſion and ſpirit, from the vaſtneſs or boldneſs of the enterpriſe, in which ſhe engages; and like the ſteed in the chace, kindles as ſhe proceeds. To the idea therefore which he conceived of the all perfect original, Thomſon's moſt finiſhed deſcriptions, may well be attributed, and that idea is ſtrongly and elegantly expreſſed in the following lines:

——But who can paint
Like nature? Can imagination boaſt,
Amid its gay creation, hues like hers?
Or can it mix them, with that matchleſs ſkill,
And loſe them in each other, as appears
In ev'ry bud that blows? If fancy then
Unequal fails beneath the pleaſing taſk,
Ah! what can language do?

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Objections to the Seaſons, *conſidered.*

Number and rhime and that harmonious ſound,
Which not the niceſt ear with harſhneſs wound,
Are neceſſary, yet but vulgar arts;
And all in vain theſe *ſuperficial parts*
Contribute to the ſtructure of the whole,
Without a Genius *too; for that's the ſoul.*

IMPARTIALITY is the beſt, and moſt indiſpenſible qualification of a good Critic. His taſk is by much the moſt delicate in the whole range of literature, and candour is not leſs eſſential, than capacity, to render him, in all reſpects, what Pope would have him to be.

Still pleaſ'd to praiſe, yet not afraid to blame!

WITHOUT what may be called a claſſical firmneſs of diſcrimination, his cenſures are at moſt but the raſh deciſions of prejudice, and his encomiums, no more than the blind apotheoſis of ignorance. I have already diſclaimed all pretenſions to this illuſtrious and important character; and profeſs to be guided in theſe remarks, by no other ſtandard, than the ſimple undiſguiſed feelings of my own

own heart. A few things, however, in the *Seaſons*, which have been often and ſeverely taxed with impropriety, deſerve ſome attention.

It has been repeatedly obſerved, and cannot be too frequently recollected, that a certain degree of imperfection, tarniſhes every human excellence. Man, is born with an ambition, that ſubjects him to perpetual mortification. Some diſtant object, whether real, or imaginary, is ſtill puſhing us onward to new acquiſitions; which, however, never take effect, without producing new blunders. For this is not the ſtate of pure unblemiſhed exertion; but like the age of infancy, an age of probation, in which, all the merit reſults from the effort, none from the execution. The deſire of improvement, is never without ſome ſhare of ſucceſs, and hopes of doing better; when attended with correſpondent endeavours, are ſeldom diſappointed. And the faults which unavoidably mark all ſuch generous attempts, frequently ſuggeſt their own apology. Indeed, Modeſty, the inſeparable handmaid of *Genius*, may alſo be conſidered, as a veil, deſtined by nature to ſhroud her blemiſhes.

The only confidence of unaſſuming merit, is a certain predilection of the human heart, of which, it is in conſtant and full poſſeſſion. This never fails to ſecure it a fair hearing, and give due weight to whatever can be alledged in its favour. It is the natural counterpart of Fame, and both inſtinctively recognize

recognize each other. But, what we are much more diſpoſed to chaſtiſe and ſuppreſs, is the temerity of ſelf-conceit; the dull, but dazzling effrontry of Folly, in the garb of Wiſdom, and the noiſy impudence of Ignorance, in the clamorous and aſpiring tone of Affectation. True ſuperiority indicates nothing inſolent or overbearing, flounces not in the hollow gait of oſtentation, borrows not the ſemblance of dignity, from the ſneers of contempt; hides not littleneſs of mind under a lofty temper, is never ſeen ſtalking on ſtilts, never gratified in cruſhing a rival. There is not, perhaps, a more complete and ludicrous contraſt in nature, than a conſciouſneſs of worth on the one hand, and the ſaucy and bluſtering pretenſions of Vanity on the other. It generally puts me in mind, of the mild and majeſtic brow of heaven, which retains eternal unruffled ſerenity, while the inextinguiſhable fury of conflecting elements, diſtract the regions below.

Mankind are ſtill very indulgent to the claims of Genius. An obvious deſire to pleaſe, and the honeſt efforts, however weak, of a laudable intention, are ſeldom treated with ſeverity. Feelings of real diffidence, are not eaſily counterfeited, nor ever diſcovered, without diſarming our reſentment. Theſe amiable diſpoſitions operate ſome how in the literary, as ſentiments of contrition do in the moral world; they ſoften that aſperity, which blunders

ſo

ſo naturally occaſion, and unleſs in a few, whoſe hearts are blaſted with implacability, change a propenſity to cenſure, into that of ſympathy and forgiveneſs.

The univerſal popularity of the *Seaſons*, is a better proof of their intrinſical merit, than all the criticiſms in the world can be to the contrary. This charming poem, ſo uniformly rural and enchanting, is equally read in town and country, by the oldeſt not leſs than the youngeſt. Thoſe who have no taſte, as well as thoſe who have the moſt poliſhed ones, are yet confeſſedly ſuſceptible of the pleaſures it affords. I have found it in the hands of Shepherds, in the remoteſt ſolitudes, who never ſaw another book, ſave their Bible; and heard ſome of its fineſt paſſages repeated by Clowns who had no motive for getting it by heart, but that of its delineating ſo well, many ſcenes and circumſtances, in which, they are neceſſarily and deeply intereſted. Yet, this great and general ſuffrage, has been no ſufficient protection againſt the cruel inroads and ravages of criticiſm. Would it not ſeem as if ſome capricious ſpirit had eſtabliſhed it, as an unalterable maxim in ſociety, that nothing ſhould afford entertainment to all, without being obnoxious to the pitiful refinements and ſarcaſms of a few.

I. The verſifications of the *Seaſons*, has been greatly blamed for want of harmony. *Harſhneſs*, is

is undoubtedly one of the moſt unpardonable defects in poetical language. Even proſe can hardly be too muſical. For this reaſon, every good writer is peculiarly attentive, not only to the choice and arrangement of his words, but alſo, and chiefly, to the form, the ſtructure, and ſymmetry of his periods. He knows, and feels the importance of flattering the ſenſes, in order to poſſeſs the heart. A chaſte ear, is as eaſily hurt as a tender eye; and rugged ſounds, produce nearly the ſame ſenſations as rugged objects. There is not a ſingle ſentence, perhaps, in all the Rev. Dr. Robertſon's writings, which might not be ſet to muſic. We read them, with the ſame calm and placid emotions, which riſe in our minds on hearing a regular tune. His eloquence, like the beautiful courſe, of ſome fair majeſtic river, rolls every where along with ſuch equal and unparalleled dignity, that, a part from the chaſte philoſophical ſpirit he breathes, the political ſagacity he diſcovers, and the fine vein of morality he inculcates, the ſuperior elegance of his ſtyle alone, intitles him to no vulgar applauſe. Swift, who ſtudied only how to expreſs himſelf with moſt perſpicuity, ſtrength, and correctneſs; is, notwithſtanding, a manifeſt contempt for meaſured proſe, one of the beſt proſe Writers we have. And, no man diſcovers a finer ear in verſifying than he does. I am apt to believe, that the extreme neatneſs which reigns through all the productions of

Pope,

Pope, might not be a little influenced, by the very delicate ſeverity of the Dean's taſte. For his uncommon claſſical purity, like a vein of rich ore, which tinges wherever it flows, though leſs or more poſſeſſed by all his congenial friends, ſeems chiefly to have originated from him. He had a manlineſs about him, that detected effeminacy and affectation in all the ſhapes they put on; and rejected, with firmneſs, their moſt inſinuating approaches. In uttering his ideas, he ſpake in a tone of indifference, that ſhewed how little he valued the plaudit of his hearers; and, more to indulge his own humour, than gratify that of the public; he ſung his ſong with a melody as ſweet, a ſprightlineſs as natural, and a mind as independant of vulgar ſuffrage, as the nightingale among the ſhades of evening; the thruſh, among the thickets of the foreſt; and the ſky-lark, among the clouds of heaven——Thus, harmony, however diſpenſible in proſe, is a material and capital ingredient in meaſured poetry. Indeed, as the whole train of thought and ſentiment may be as much, the Inſpiration of the Muſes without, as with their language, Harmony ſeems an eſſential characteriſtic of poetical expreſſion. In this charming quality of ſtyle, all emphatical ſounds are ſo happily varied, as to prevent every kind of monotony, and follow each other by a gradual ſwell, in one pure ſucceſſion of the ſweeteſt and richeſt modulation. For this

reaſon,

reaſon, tranſitions in the ſenſe, as well as ſound, are managed with the ſofteſt and niceſt elegance; the rules of number and quantity obſerved with inviolable fidelity, and every accent diſpoſed, according to the moſt exquiſite exactneſs and delicacy. The poſition of the pauſes, is ſuſceptible of much variation, and one of the richeſt ſources of poetical beauty. Dryden's inimitable *Ode on the Power of Muſic*, owes much of its excellence to this particular circumſtance. The meaſure is perpetually changing with the ſubject, and the changes in both, are as ſoft as they are ſudden, and as eaſy as unexpected. Milton was the firſt who introduced blank verſe into regular poetry, and has ſucceeded ſo well, as to keep all his numerous tribe of ſervile imitators, at a very mortifying diſtance. He is certainly the greateſt maſter of harmonious numbers, that ever the Engliſh language produced, as well as poſſeſſed of the ſublimeſt imagination that ever felt the raptures of poetical enthuſiaſm. His manner has been often aſſumed, or rather, independant of rhime, ſet an example of ſuch lofty and muſical verſification, as gave a new turn to poetical taſte. Addiſon's papers on *Paradiſe Loſt*, awakened the national attention to its melody, and made a general and ſtrong impreſſion in its favour. Hence many poets of that age, and ſome with conſiderable ſucceſs, threw aſide the inſipid jingle of rhime, and adopted the Miltonian meaſure. Thomſon was

one,

one, and not the leaſt happy of the number. His *Caſtle of Indolence*, however, with a few other metrecal pieces, is evidence ſufficient, how well he might have ſucceeded in another dreſs. But, he probably preferred *blank verſe*, becauſe of the copious range it gives to fancy. What a pity, it may be ſaid, that he did not turn his periods with a little more delicacy. For my own part, I ſhould not have liked them the worſe, though he had. But, who can help obſerving, that this complaint, with a thouſand others, has originated ſolely from critics. The ſentiments and ideas of the poet, take ſuch full poſſeſſion of our minds and affections, that we inſtantly looſe ſight of his manner. At leaſt, I never in my life, heard any one tax him, with want of harmony, whoſe heart was not then in a tone of refinement, that rendered them totally incapable of any other feeling. The truth is, he uniformly writes from a full heart, and in that temper could hardly be ſuppoſed ſufficiently attentive on all occaſions, to the ſmoothneſs of his verſe. Shakeſpeare himſelf, compoſed in a ſimilar, though ſuperior tone of ſenſibility, and his numbers are liable to a ſimilar objection. Perhaps, it will be found on enquiry, that Milton is not always moſt harmonious, when moſt tender. It would, however, be a dangerous innovation in criticiſm, to fix it as a maxim, that pathetic ſentiments are incompatible with the moſt melodious numbers. And

yet

yet it does ſtrike me very ſtrongly, though I cannot but mention it with the utmoſt diffidence, that the poet, who writes only from imagination, has a much better chance to excel in the art of chaſtiſing and finiſhing his language, than he, whoſe heart is ſolely engaged in the buſineſs. After all, what though we allow, that Thomſon's taſte in this reſpect, is not the moſt conſpicuous part of his merit, and that his verſe, on the whole, is not ſo finely and uniformly ſonorous as tha of Milton. Suppoſe his accents are frequently miſplaced, that his ſyllables do not always run into one another with due poetical eaſe and gentleneſs, and that his vowels and conſonants are ſeldom happily enough mingled, to mellow and modify the ſound. Is it not a good deal for him, that he is ſo uniformly ſtrong, expreſſive, and pointed? For though he ſhould want melody, as he often does, he never wants nerves. He appears to have wrote, with the ſame vigour, in which he thought. The object he exhibits ſtruck him forcibly, and the impreſſion loſes nothing of its energy, from his method of expreſſion. Perhaps, he imagined, that the roughneſs of our language could not be impaired, without impairing its ſtrength, or more probably, that extreme ſmoothneſs was by no means eſſential to good poetry. Indeed, if we may judge of his taſte, from his habits in life, he was not over fond of faſtidious poliſhing. For with the gentleſt heart in

the world, his exterior was characteriſtically blunt and awkward. By all accounts, he was of too open a temper, to adopt the diſguiſes of faſhion, too manly to relax into all the extravagance of mental refinement, and too rigidly honeſt, not to be homely and plain. The feature moſt prominent in life, is uniformly the moſt ſtriking in all original productions. The *Seaſons*, is more than any other poem extant, the picture of a pure mind, in uniſon with a fund of the ſweeteſt ſenſibility, of a maſterly underſtanding, in conjunction with a moſt benevolent heart; of the ſtrongeſt poetical powers, under the ſanction and management of diſpoſitions inflexibly virtuous.

II. WANT of ſimplicity, has alſo been imputed to the Author of the *Seaſons*. Imagination is never in leſs danger of diſappointment, than in hunting after blemiſhes in the precincts of humanity. All our acquiſitions begin and end with ſimplicity. This is the point whence we ſet out, and in which the higheſt perfection we reach in art, neceſſarily terminates. Acquired, are early ſubſtituted for natural habits, and it is not without the utmoſt ſeverity of diſcipline, and till a very long time has expired, if ever, that we are able to unite them. But this union, whenever, and wherever, it does take place, infallibly produces ſimplicity. The moſt obvious things, are not always the moſt eaſily defined. It

is

is impoſſible, perhaps, to communicate my preciſe idea of ſimplicity, to the Reader, as he might probably find ſome difficulty, in communicating his to me. This much however, is certain, that affectation is the oppoſite of ſimplicity, and uniformly ſhocking, unleſs, when combined with an aſſemblage of agreeable circumſtances; we find it ſometimes among the foibles of the young and the fair. As for an old Fop, it is undoubtedly one of the moſt nauſeous things in exiſtence. The hoary head, is a natural and ſignificant emblem of dignity and wiſdom. No aſſurance, but that of conſcious and acknowledged virtue and generoſity, ſits gracefully on years and experience. To compare great things with ſmall; the ſun going down among the putrid clouds, which load and pollute our atmoſphere, is no improper repreſentation, to one in the neighbourhood of London, of declining life, choaked with the fumes of imaginary conſequence, and trembling on the verge of mortality, amidſt the ludicrous intoxications of vanity. Yet, who has not had the misfortune of ſometimes ſeeing one of theſe antique *petit maitres*, dealing out with much unmeaning ſtatelineſs and ſolemnity, all his ſtock of folly, flattery, and complaiſance; and even full of the moſt tireſome attentions to thoſe, whom notwithſtanding he probably regarded in his heart with contempt. Surely, every ſpecies of hypocriſy, is affectation in extreme; and he muſt be an original indeed, who with a ce-

mony, that is a perfect burleſque on every thing elegant and genteel, is yet, not deſtitute either of taſte or talents. In writing, as well as in life, want of real worth is not eaſily concealed, and what no artificial embelliſhment can ſupply. Unluckily however, the latter generally prevails moſt, in the abſence of the former. For the bombaſt of dulneſs, and the exuberance of genius, are eſſentially and palpably diſtinct. Perhaps, Waller, Gay, Parnel, and Goldſmith, have more ſimplicity in their verſification, than moſt Engliſh poets. But this quality, beautiful and charming as it is, we ſeldom find in conjunction with uncommon richneſs of ſentiment, or great ardour of thinking. It evaporates on the leaſt appearance of effort, and is always found in union with a taſte highly poliſhed, but rarely with a genius originally ſtrong. I have no objection, though Shakeſpeare ſhould be produced as an exception to this remark. The heart is not more capricious in its attachments, than taſte ſometimes in its deciſions; and there are not wanting, who think him one of the greateſt maſters of ſimplicity in the Engliſh language. But while he reigns ſupreme in the higher departments of his art, no inferior ſpecies of excellence can be of the leaſt conſequence to his fame. And whatever my taſte may ſuffer from the declaration, I muſt be of opinion, that Thomſon often rivals him with ſucceſs, in the ſimplicity of his deſcriptions. I ſubmit

mit it to better judges, whether the following paſſages, which are among the firſt that accrued to me, do not breathe as much ſimplicity, as a proper conciſeneſs of language, and the neceſſary cloſeneſs of ideas could well permit? The firſt, refers to the various and amiable ſenſations which fill the contemplative mind, as ſhe looks wiſtfully around her on the fall of the year.

Ten thouſand thouſand fleet ideas, ſuch
As never mingled with the vulgar dream,
Croud faſt into the mind's creative eye.
As faſt the correſpondent paſſions riſe,
As varied, and as high: Devotion rais'd
To rapture, and divine aſtoniſhment;
The love of nature unconfin'd, and, chief,
Of human race; the large ambitious wiſh,
To make them bleſt; the ſigh for ſuffering worth
Loſt in obſcurity; the noble ſcorn
Of tyrant-pride; the fearleſs great reſolve;
The wonder which the dying patriot draws,
Inſpiring glory thro' remoteſt time;
Th' awakened throb for virtue, and for fame;
The ſympathies of love, and friendſhip dear;
With all the ſocial Offspring of the heart.

The next is taken from his account of ſolitude, which he has ſo juſtly celebrated, as greatly preferable to the moſt ſplendid accomodations of faſhionable life. He poſſeſſed a fund of entertainment in his own mind, which he thought but ill exchanged,

for all the tumultuous rotations of gaiety and madneſs in the world. And the bleſſings he enumerates, are of all others, the moſt likely, to confer a conſiderable ſhare of comfort, if not felicity, on the preſent condition of humanity.

Here too dwells ſimple truth; plain innocence;
Unſullied beauty; ſound unbroken youth,
Patient of labour, with a little pleas'd;
Health ever blooming; unambitious toil;
Calm contemplation, and poetic eaſe.

The laſt inſtance of his ſimplicity: I ſhall now produce, is his character of Milton. It is taken from a copious apoſtrophe to Britain, in which the poet, in a rich profuſion of characteriſtic colouring, paints thoſe of her ſons, who have moſt diſtinguiſhed themſelves, in ſcience, arts, and arms. He is ſo happy in the modification of his ideas, and the preciſion of his terms, that even figurative language is here of advantage to ſimplicity. This, is one of the few examples, either in poetry or proſe, in which compariſons give a juſtneſs and perſpicuity to ſtyle, of which the moſt appoſite, natural diction is utterly incapable.

Is not each great, each amiable muſe
Of claſſic ages, in thy Milton met?
A genius univerſal as his Theme,
Aſtoniſhing as Chaos, as the bloom
Of blowing Eden fair, as Heaven ſublime!

But

But original minds only, are capable of knowing when it is proper to ſacrifice inferior, to ſuperior excellence. Perhaps, an exchange of this kind may be neceſſary, in no ſpecies of poetry, ſo often as in that of the deſcriptive. And then, none but he who wiſhed more to amuſe the fancy, than to intereſt and improve the heart; would ſubſtitute ſoft and flowery, for ſtrong and ardent conceptions of the truth. Few are acquainted with the various avenues of ſcience. Genius is often ſtruck with innumerable aſſociations and veins of connection, which are altogether imperceptible to others. And ſtyle is conſtantly and deeply tinctured, with ſuch impreſſions, as theſe infallibly ſtamp on imagination. Thus, Pope has unwarily involved the Genius and the Dunce, in the ſame indiſcriminate cenſure.

Poets like painters thus unſkill'd to trace,
The naked nature, and the living grace,
With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.

The late Dr. Goldſmith has oftener than once, affected to ſpeak of Thomſon in terms very diſreſpectful. But, that gentleman's taſte of poetry was much too faſtidious to become a ſtandard. All the pieces he has left as ſpecimens of his own, are ſo extremely laboured, that their chief merit lies in

ſimplicity of verſification. The famous *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, did not eſcape his invidious ſarcaſms. The truth is, a very ſtrange and ſilly affectation, modified his opinions of men, manners, and things. I have it from the moſt reſpectable authority, that he even preferred Beaumont and Fletcher, to Shakeſpeare. So that his cenſure, eſpecially, as oppoſed to publick and prevailing approbation, does our poet, on the whole, no great diſcredit.

WHOEVER knows any thing about the nature and texture of compoſition, muſt be ſenſible, how much the chaſteneſs and ſpirit of it, depends on a delicate choice of epithets. I will not deny, that many of Thomſon's luxuriancies, ſeem to have ſtood in need of ſome pruning. And yet, I muſt declare, very few of them ſtrike me, as intirely ſuperfluous. Ideas never come into the mind alone. They have all their circumſtances and ſentiments, which like the accompanyments of muſic, are inſeparable from their being. To exhibit our conceptions juſtly, theſe muſt have a ſhare in our expreſſion. Thus, the diffuſeneſs of our Author, is never without a meaning. Even his verboſity is often ſignificant, and ſometimes beautiful. He has indeed, been frequently charged with an improper ſelection of Epithets, but, I preſume, not always with ſufficient candour.

dour. Epithets, are in writing, what colours are in painting, they diſtinguiſh, aſcertain, and give identity to the object. The ſtyle of common Writers, is calculated ſome how to give no preciſe conception of what they would ſay. They ſeldom loſe ſight of the ſubject indeed, but ſtill you perceive it only at a diſtance. This makes it ſtrike them as inexhauſtible, and produces all that tedious and dull prolixity, which renders their beſt performances, ſo flimſy, unaffecting, and inſipid, to men of taſte. Imagination figures nothing, the underſtanding conceives nothing, the heart feels nothing, which to *Genius* has not a particular and peculiar aſpect. And, a good Writer, ſtudies only to preſent his Readers with a faithful copy of his own images. In my opinion, Thomſon does this with ſingular dexterity. He is even happy enough on many occaſions, to fix the attention on ſome new idea, merely by an unexpected felicity in the application of ſome new term. Theſe, however vague, at firſt ſight, when minutely conſidered, generally diſcover a richneſs and appoſition quite uncommon, as well as expreſs ſome very characteriſtic, though latent quality of the object to which they refer. Thus, for example, and it is the only one I ſhall ſpecify, the *roſy fingered hours*, and *light footed dews*, may ſeem quaint to minds not finely ſuſceptible of the ſofter charms of nature, but when we take into conſideration the temporary and periſhing

duration of the moſt delicate vegetables, together with thoſe ſweet but evaneſcent perfumes, which they ſhed around them; the image is not leſs particular and diſcriminating, than elegant and poetical.

III. The *Seaſons*, it has likewiſe been ſaid, are tinged in many places with obſcurity. This, is a charge ſufficiently weighty, at leaſt, to rouſe attention. For, what is the art of writing, good for, if after all our attempts to be explicit, our ideas continue ſtill unknown to one another. Intelligence, is the firſt object, and perſpicuity, undoubtedly, the moſt eſſential quality of language. All communications of mind, with mind, ſuppoſe a medium mutually underſtood. Whatever obſcures that medium, is an obvious deduction from the pleaſure or information, it was intended to convey. Irregular conſtruction, improper terms, want of preciſion in the application of them, every ſpecies, indeed, of equivocation or ambiguity, is a degree of obſcurity. And, the mode of expreſſion is culpable, wherever the ſenſe appears double, indeterminate, clouded, or perplexed. Thus, all inſtantaneous and coincident ideas, breaking in on a certain train of thought, and either ſupplanting it, by a temporary confuſion of images, or producing an accidental abruptneſs of ſtyle, are extremely detrimental to perſpicuity in writing. The leaſt inatten-

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tion to philological minutiæ, the chaſte acceptation of words, the ſimple ſtructure of language, and the whole ſyſtem of grammatical purity, neceſſarily renders the meaning of an Author, much leſs obvious than otherwiſe it would be. Durſt I hazard any opinion on a ſubject much too verbal not to be ſuſceptible of the deepeſt acuteneſs, I ſhould imagine, moſt of the obſcurity we meet with in the *Seaſons*, to ariſe from violent inverſions of ſtyle, over-wrought deſcriptions, and a culpable uſe of technical phraſes.

Inversion of language, when managed with taſte and delicacy, is the ſource of many ſtriking beauties. But, it ought never to be forgotten, that theſe beauties, are wholly artificial, and never without a degree of impropriety, proportionable to that diſtortion from which they originate, and are inſeparable. So that the leaſt encroachments they make on the great laws of perſpicuity, are doubly cenſurable. To ſhake the attention, and much more to ſuſpend it, is a violation of eaſe and nature, which no adventitious beauty whatever can ſufficiently juſtify. I ſhould not be much chagrined, however, to find the propriety of the following inſtances diſputed. Dr. Goldſmith, has juſtly obſerved of Dryden's famous Ode,* which has no

* *See the Beauties of Engliſh poetry, ſelected by* Dr. Goldſmith. This little compilation of Poems, the Editor boldly

parallel for ſimplicity of expreſſion, majeſty of thought, and harmony of numbers, in the Engliſh language; *that it gives its beauties rather at a third or fourth, than at a firſt peruſal.*

I. The rapid radiance inſtantaneous ſtrikes
Th' illumin'd mountain, thro' the foreſt ſtreams,
Shakes on the floods, and in a yellow miſt,
Far ſmoaking o'er th' interminable plain,
In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.
Moiſt, bright, and green, the landſcape laughs around.
Full ſwell the woods; their very muſic wakes,
Mix'd in wild concert, with the warbling brooks
Increas'd, the diſtant bleatings of the hills,
And hollow lows reſponſive from the vales,
Whence blending all the ſweetened zephyr ſprings.
Mean time refracted from yon eaſtern cloud,
Beſtriding earth, the grand ethereal bow
Shoots up immenſe; and every hue unfolds,
In fair proportion running from the red,

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boldly pronounces, the beſt of the kind. In the preface, he declares, that none are admitted which do not poſſeſs a beginning, a middle, and an end. It often happens, however, that men of the greateſt diſcernment, have not always the beſt memories. For, in the ſhort character prefixed to the *Alma of Prior*, he bluntly proteſts, that he does not know what the Poet would be at. It does not require much wit, to add, that the criticiſm is at leaſt, as trifling as the poem, and much more petulant.

To

To where the violet fades into the ſky.
Here, awful Newton, the diſſolving clouds
Form, fronting on the ſun, thy ſhowry priſm;
And to the ſage-inſtructed eye unfold
The various twine of light, by thee diſclos'd
From the white mingling maze. Not ſo the boy;
He wondering views the bright enchantment bend,
Delightful, o'er the radiant fields, and runs
To catch the falling glory; but amaz'd
Beholds th' amuſive arch before him fly,
Then vaniſh quite away. Still night ſucceeds,
A ſoftened ſhade, and ſaturated earth
Awaits the morning-beam, to give to light,
Rais'd thro' ten thouſand different plaſtic tubes,
The balmy treaſures of the former day.

II.——Breath'd hot,
From all the boundleſs furnace of the ſky,
And the wide glittering waſte of burning ſand,
A ſuffocating wind the pilgrim ſmites
With inſtant death. Patient of thirſt and toil,
Son of the deſart! even the camel feels,
Shot thro' his wither'd heart, the fiery blaſt.
Or from the black-red ether, burſting broad,
Sallies the ſudden whirlwind. Strait the ſands
Commov'd around, in gathering eddies play:
Nearer and nearer ſtill they darkening come;
Till, with the general all-involving ſtorm
Swept up, the whole continuous wilds ariſe;
And by their noon-day fount dejected thrown,
Or ſunk at night in ſad diſaſtrous ſleep,
Beneath deſcending hills, the caravan
Is buried deep——

——Whate'er

III. ——Whate'er the wintry froſt
Nitrous prepar'd; the various-bloſſom'd ſpring
Put in white promiſe forth; and ſummer ſuns
Concocted ſtrong, ruſh boundleſs now to view,
Full, perfect all, and ſwell my glorious theme.

OBSCURITY, is often inſeparable from elaborate writing. In ſtruggling hard for a full deſcription, it is ſometimes impoſſible to avoid perplexity. This often produces a ſwell in the ſtyle, which inſenſibly drowns the ſenſe. One would imagine, ſome Authors wrote on purpoſe that they might not be underſtood, and that others fell into the ſame ſnare, merely by too much ſolicitude in avoiding it. When the ſubject ruſhes on their minds, they ſeem as if they were in haſte to deliver themſelves of the impreſſions it makes, and multiply expreſſions in accumulating every circumſtance, that the picture may be exhibited intire. Then, it is chiefly, that Thomſon, at leaſt, inconſciouſly works himſelf up into the turgid and obſcure. I ſhall only produce two inſtances, in which the leading idea is almoſt buried among a multitude of acceſſary ones, and where, for me at leaſt, he is much too profound, to be plain.

THE firſt, is, where he accounts for the origin of thunder and lightning. In enumerating the cauſes which produce this alarming combination of hoſtile elements, he dives into the deepeſt receſſes of philoſophy.

loſophy. Such inveſtigations are peculiarly appoſite to his plan, and he never avoids them. The acuteneſs of his underſtanding is uniformly equal to the boldneſs of his fancy. And, he ſeldom mentions any ſtriking phenomena, without ſuggeſting ſome ſcientific hint, not leſs original, than the many beautiful ſtrokes of poetry with which it is generally connected.

Behold, ſlow-ſettling o'er the lurid grove
Unuſual darkneſs broods; and growing gains
The full poſſeſſion of the ſky, ſurcharg'd
With wrathful vapour, from the ſecret beds,
Where ſleep the mineral generations, drawn.
Thence nitre, ſulphur, and the fiery ſpume
Of fat bitumen, ſteaming on the day,
With various-tinctur'd trains of latent flame,
Pollute the ſky, and in yon baleful cloud,
A reddening gloom, a magazine of fate,
Ferment; till, by the touch ethereal rous'd,
The daſh of clouds, or irritating war
Of fighting winds, while all is calm below,
They furious ſpring.——

The other, is, his deſcription of froſt; which, in his manner, is equally maſterly and expreſſive, has no other fault indeed, but that it requires rather too much attention, either to comprehend its meaning, or reliſh its beauties. The whole account however, is not leſs natural, than ſignificant. And

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the original is too well known, not to intereſt us in the image. There is ſomething wonderfully picturesque and poetical in the idea,——of the *froſt* arreſting the bickering ſtream,——the impriſoned river growling below,——the frozen earth ringing loud,——the diſtant waterfalls ſwelling the breeze,——the pale unjoyous eye of morn,——the pendant icicles,——the fancied figures of the froſtwork,——and the Shepherds ſwift deſcent on the ſlippery ſurface. Theſe are beauties, which perhaps ſhine the brighter, and ſtrike the more forcibly, for being ſeen through a duſky medium.

What art thou, froſt? and whence are thy keen ſtores
Deriv'd, thou ſecret all-invading power,
Whom even th' illuſive fluid cannot fly?
Is not thy potent energy, unſeen,
Myriads of little ſalts, or hook'd, or ſhap'd
Like double wedges, and diffus'd immenſe
Thro' water, earth, and ether? Hence at eve,
Steam'd eager from the red horizon round,
With the fierce rage of winter deep ſuffus'd,
An icy gale, oft ſhifting, o'er the pool
Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career
Arreſts the bickering ſtream. The looſened ice,
Let down the flood, and half diſſolv'd by day,
Ruſtles no more; but to the ſedgy bank
Faſt grows, or gathers round the pointed ſtone,
A cryſtal pavement, by the breath of heaven
Cemented firm; till, ſeiz'd from ſhore to ſhore,
The whole impriſon'd river growls below.

Loud

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A double noiſe; while, at his evening watch,
The village dog deters the nightly thief;
The heifer lows; the diſtant water-fall
Swells in the breeze; and, with the haſty tread
Of traveller, the hollow ſounding plain
Shakes from afar. The full ethereal round,
Infinite worlds diſcloſing to the view,
Shines out intenſely keen; and, all one cope
Of ſtarry glitter, glows from pole to pole.
From pole to pole the rigid influence falls,
Thro' the ſtill night, inceſſant, heavy, ſtrong,
And ſeizes nature faſt. It freezes on;
Till morn, late-riſing o'er the drooping world,
Lifts her pale eye unjoyous. Then appears
The various labour of the ſilent night:
Prone from the dripping eave, and dumb caſcade,
Whoſe idle torrents only ſeem to roar,
The pendant icicle; the froſt-work fair,
Where tranſient hues, and fancied figures riſe;
Wide-ſpouted o'er the hill, the frozen brook,
A livid tract, cold-gleaming on the morn;
The foreſt bent beneath the plumy wave;
And by the froſt refin'd the whiter ſnow,
Incruſted hard, and ſounding to the tread
Of early ſhepherd, as he penſive ſeeks
His pining flock, or from the mounting top,
Pleas'd with the ſlippery ſurface, ſwift deſcends.

But, what contributes moſt of all, to give the *Seaſons* an air of obſcurity, is an incautious uſe of technical terms. For, poetry is never ſo amiable,

as when ſhe brings light out of darkneſs, or ſo unſeemly, as when ſhe diſguiſes the objects ſhe would exhibit. But men of ſcience are extremely apt to preſume too far on that of their Readers. Among an enlightened people, every ſeparate branch of knowledge is couched under a peculiar phraſeology of its own. And, a barbarous creation of ſyſtems, renders this artificial jargon ſo indiſpenſible to the regular acquiſition of ſcience, that there is no attaining the one, without ſtudying the other. The votaries of arts and ſciencies, however, ſhould not blab their ſecrets on every ear, or obtrude a language peculiar only to certain connoiſſeurs, indiſcriminately on all. It is conſidered in almoſt every poliſhed country, as an inſult on the natives; for, foreigners to retain inflexibly the modes and faſhions of their own. Stubborn habits are ill to bend: but, when a reduction of them may be attended with convenience to others, there is at leaſt ſome merit in the attempt. Literature of all kinds becomes pedantry only, when unſeaſonably diſplayed. Thomſon's introduction to the ſeparate parts of his poem, is uniformly chargeable with this defect. By ſubſtituting an aſtronomical, in the room of a poetical account of the annual revolution of the *Seaſons*, we find the various Signs of the Zodiack wriggling into verſe. Indeed, had he meant to turn the ſweet approaches of *Spring* into ridicule, he could hardly have done it more effectually than in theſe lines. At

At laſt, from *Aries* rolls the bounteous ſun,
And the bright *Bull* receives him———

Who but an adept in the Science of Aſtronomy, can be ſuppoſed to know, that *twins*, is the name of a certain *hieroglypic*, the third in order of thoſe which mark the annual track of the Sun through the heavens; that *Cancer* is the Sign of the ſummer ſolſtice, or that point in the ſolar eliptic where the Sun enters in June. What preciſe meaning then can the bulk of Readers, affix to this couple of verſes.

When now no more th' alternate *Twins* are fir'd
And *Cancer* reddens with the ſolar blaze.

Autumn, is not introduced one whit more gracefully. For, Readers only, who have been taught the uſe of the Globes, can ſufficiently underſtand his deſcription of the Sun's declenſion, when in the fall of the year he moves directly under the equinoctial, and makes our days and nights, preciſely of an equal length.

When the bright *Virgin* gives the beauteous days,
And *Libra* weighs in equal ſcales the year.

He involves the coming on of Winter, in the ſame voluntary darkneſs. What a harſh collection

of unintelligible terms hurts the ear, at the ſame time that it mars the ſenſe, in theſe two verſes.

To *Capricorn*, the *Centaur Archer* yields,
And fierce *Aquarius* ſtains th' inverted year.

How much more ſimple and beautiful, as well as perſpicuous, is the ſtanza with which Akenſide begins an Ode, on the Winter ſolſtice.

The radiant Ruler of the year,
At length his wintry goal attains;
Soon to reverſe the long career,
And northward bend his ſteady reins.

STILL however, it muſt be allowed, that Milton ſet the firſt inglorious example, of this glaring impropriety. In *Paradiſe Loſt*, the viciſſitudes of the Seaſons, is only an accidental topic, and yet, he mentions almoſt every hypotheſis that has been adopted by philoſophers, to account for theſe phenomena. The ſplendour of excellence, for the moſt part, blinds us, to all its concomitant imperfections. With ſuch a maſter conſtantly in his eye, it was almoſt impoſſible for Thomſon to avoid the ſnare. The copy compared with the original is however extremely venial.

——Some ſay the ſun
Was bid turn reins, from the *equinoctial* road,

Like

Like diſtant breadth to *Taurus*, with the ſeven
Atlantic ſiſters; and the Spartan *Twins*,
Up to the *Tropic Crab:* thence down amain
By *Leo* and the *Virgin* and the *Scales*,
As deep as *Capricorn*, to bring in change
Of ſeaſons to each clime.

EVEN Pope, whoſe chief characteriſtic is the moſt claſſical propriety, unfortunately mentions *Arcturus* and *Cancer*, in ſome very beautiful verſes on angling and hunting. So that he is here, as at other times, not without a ſhare in his own cenſure.

Such labour'd *nothings*, in ſo ſtrange a ſtyle,
Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned ſmile.

IV. AN improper management of figurative language, is the laſt charge brought againſt the Author of the *Seaſons* we ſhall mention. It would indeed be abſurd, either to imagine, or alledge, that Thomſon wrote better than any other Poet, but, that he has not wrote worſe, and that his writings are only marked with ſuch blemiſhes, as the beſt of them, have not been able wholly to avoid, are facts much in his favour. It is impoſſible perhaps, to fix preciſely, the limits between literal and figurative language. We may as well attempt, in ſocial and poliſhed ſociety, to trace the imperceptible ſhades, where nature ends, and art begins. In this reſpect, the more I think on the ſubject, the

more am I ſatisfied, that the refinements of critiſm, however ingenuous, do very little ſervice; perhaps ſome injury to the intereſt of polite learning. The native ardour and enthuſiaſm of genius, muſt be ſenſibly affected and diminiſhed, by the endleſs and teaſing diſtinctions which thus obtrude on her hallowed range. How few ſucceed in poetry, who begin with criticiſm. The path which leads to the Temple of the Muſes, is ſteep indeed, but never rugged or perplexed; unleſs to thoſe, who miſtake illuſions of vanity, for the voice of inſpiration. It ſeems odd enough, but is remarkably true, that our greateſt Poets, are generally leaſt on their guard againſt petty blunders. In ſome minds there is a happineſs however of this kind extremely beautiful, but the misfortune is, when it fixes the attention more on expreſſion than thought. We may poſſeſs an elegance, to which the correcteſt taſte can have no objection, but muſt bid farewel to that energy which reaches the heart, whenever we catch ourſelves indifferent to the latter, and ingroſſed by the former. Our ideas are often tinctured by the objects that ſuggeſt them. We rarely find a ſtyle extremely poliſhed, the vehicle of any thing ſolid and ſubſtantial. Good and bad Writers differ eſſentially and ſtrangely, in working up their compoſitions. The former, are chiefly and ſolely deſirous of giving their conceptions intire, as they riſe in their own minds, with every

every collateral ſentiment and circumſtance that language can expreſs, and apart from whatever the niceſt preciſion can reject as heterogeneous. The latter, are ſo attentive to the choice and poſition of words, that the various connections and delicate aſſociation of things, are moſtly, if not always overlooked. The mind, like the eye, ſeldom takes in her proſpects with methodical exactneſs. In truth, our thoughts become ſyſtematical only when ſhackled by authority. And, there is a happy negligence in writing as in manners, which, in both, may be called the parent of dignity and grace. To a licentiouſneſs ſo peculiarly deſcriptive of great minds, we owe almoſt every capital production that does honour to the human intellect. Is not the Iliad, in this reſpect, an everlaſting monument of nature's ſuperiority to art? Had Shakeſpeare foreſeen what a formidable ſwarm of Editors, Critics, Commentators, and Vampers, were to faſten on his muſe, his heart muſt have failed him on the firſt attempt. In the union of greatneſs and chaſtenſs of correctneſs and ſpirit, Virgil, perhaps has no rival; but invention, in which he is ſingularly deficient, is fairly worth them both. No great induſtry, and I am ſure very ſuperficial parts, are ſufficient to come under the Poet's deſcription. But, who would appropriate the compliment, that wiſhes to avoid the ſarcaſm which concludes it,

But in ſuch lays as neither ebb nor flow,
Correctly cold, and regularly low,
That ſhunning faults, one quiet tenor keep,
We cannot blame indeed, but we may ſleep.

This over-wrought purity of ſtyle however, ſuppoſes a thouſand frivolous attentions, to which thoſe only are equal, who can do nothing elſe; and cramp the ſpirit of compoſition, with a dry laborious preciſion, altogether incongruous to the generous and nervous effuſions of liberal minds. But, ſuppoſing taſte and genius incompatible, why ſhould one be ſacrificed, to the caprice of the other? Shall the fire of imagination be extinguiſhed, by the chilling breath of faſtidious accuracy? Since the united perfection of both is unattainable, is it not obvious, to which the preference is due? Perhaps, the declenſion of literature, may be dated, in every nation and age, from that preciſe period, when criticiſm became the faſhionable ſtudy. Genius evaporates at the very firſt ſight of this hydra-headed monſter. I have known Rhetoricians poſſeſſed of genuine eloquence, and even Critics favoured by the Muſes; but, inſtances of this kind are ſo rare, that the junction of talents thus diſſimilar, muſt be unnatural. Did not oratory, in ſome ſenſe, end with Tully's treatiſe on that ſubject in Rome; and poetry, with Ariſtotle's Poetics in Greece? Excellence is the offſpring of enthuſiaſm, on ſome happy

happy moments may be hit in any thing, but can be taught in nothing. And, the vaſt multiplicity of rules, to which all kinds of writing are now reduced, ſtartle thoſe only from the attempt, who have the beſt and only chance of ſucceeding. For, who knows not, that indocility is the characteriſtic of dulneſs, and, that genius is ſtill ſuperior to all preſcription. Though Thomſon's metaphors are ſaid to be forced, I will venture to affirm, that few poetical Readers are of that opinion. If we ſit down to peruſe a poem or work of genius, with a reſolution to check every emotion of pleaſure it produces, he muſt be blind indeed, who ſtumbles not on a thouſand blunders. But, who that has a heart ſuſceptible of genuine beauty, would not cheerfully forego ſuch a *malignant dull delight.*—— *Showry radiance, moving ſoftneſs, breezy coolneſs, flowing ſpring, dewy light, freſhneſs breathes, and breathing proſpect,* are ſome of the various metaphors for which our Author has been cenſured. And, if his Critics decide from their own feelings only, they may, for aught I know, be right. In every thing, we ſhould judge from our own convictions, but we had need to be well informed, before we preſume to preſcribe. One who knew the limits of criticiſm well, ſuggeſts the following apology for the *Seaſons*, and every ſpecies of fine poetry ſubjected to the ſame cavils.

Some

Some figures monſtrous and miſhap'd appear,
Conſider'd ſingly or beheld too near,
Which, but proportion'd to their light or place,
Due diſtance reconciles to form and grace.

The Reader will here be pleaſed with a few obſervations from a late Author of reputation, who has left them behind him as a ſtriking memorial againſt all word-catchers, and nibblers at genius. The amiable Dr. Gregory, in his COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE STATE AND FACULTIES OF MAN, WITH THOSE OF THE ANIMAL WORLD: ſpeaking of that aſtoniſhing aſſociation which attends imagination in all her excurſions, ſubjoins this judicious and benevolent remark. The Poet's eye *as it glances* from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, *is ſtruck with numberleſs ſimilitudes and analogies, that not only paſs unnoticed by the reſt of mankind, but cannot even be comprehended when ſuggeſted to them. There is a correſpondence between certain external forms of nature, and certain affections of the mind, that may be felt, but cannot always be explained. Sometimes the aſſociation may be accidental, but it often ſeems to be innate. Hence the great difficulty of aſcertaining the true ſublime. It cannot, in truth, be confined within any bounds; it is intirely relative, depending on the warmth and livelineſs of the imagination, and therefore different, in different countries. For the ſame reaſon, wherever there is great richneſs and profuſion of imagery, which in ſome ſpecies of poetry is a great beauty; there are always very gene-*

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ral complaints of obſcurity, which is increaſed by thoſe ſudden tranſitions that bewilder a common Reader, but are eaſily traced by a poetical one. An accurate ſcrutiny into the propriety of images and metaphors, is uſeleſs. If it be not felt at firſt, it can ſeldom be communicated; while we endeavour to analyſe it, the impreſſion vaniſhes.

PERSONIFICATION and apoſtrophe, are congenial figures, and two of the boldeſt, and fineſt in poetry. Our Author, ſomewhat unfortunately, did not conſult the canons of Criticiſm in his uſe of either; but, independent of all artificial deciſion, ſung the chearful ditties of a grateful heart, juſt as Nature and the Muſes inſpired him. Theſe modes of expreſſion originate from a peculiar tone of mind, and like every other part of ſpeech, are prior in exiſtence to the rules that would regulate them. They were not purpoſely invented to beautify language, but ſuggeſted by neceſſity, and occaſionally adopted to ſupply its defects. And, mankind in every ſtate of ſociety are found in poſſeſſion of them, while totally unacquainted with theories, or ſyſtems, either of poetry or proſe.

SIMPLE and direct terms, do not always expreſs our ſentiments and conceptions ſufficiently. All ideas, ſuggeſted by a heated imagination, ſcorn the plain and uſual medium of conveyance; and violent paſſions, like electrical bodies, ſenſibly affect whatever comes within the ſphere of their velocity. When the heart ſwells with pleaſure or pain, with

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extacy or perturbation, with placid, indignant, or ſublime emotions, all operations of mind are unavoidably tinctured with theſe feelings. Whatever the judgment thus dictates, the memory recalls, or the fancy feigns, is equally moulded and adjuſted, by this great ſympathetic law. Hence we *pauſe*, *perſonify*, and *apoſtrophize*, not to enrich our ſtyle, but ſolely to exhibit the real ſtate of our minds; and, becauſe no common language can do juſtice to ſuch an impaſſioned ſenſibility. All moderation is at an end, whenever the heart breaks looſe; and the ſallies of Genius, under that predicament, are certainly intitled to every allowance, as ordinary minds are not competent judges of its ardour.

FIGURES of this kind, however, and which contribute moſt of all to the beauty and dignity of ſtyle, have their degrees, as well as the cauſes that produce them. Do we not often catch ourſelves conferring ſenſibility and motion on inanimate objects inconſciouſly? We ſpeak almoſt of every thing around us, and in a manner perfectly diſpaſſionate, in the ſame elevated language, without running any riſque of being miſunderſtood. But poetical imaginations, like the ſun, diffuſe peculiar energy and animation wherever they move, and liberally impart a ſhare of their own feelings to whatever pleaſes them beſt, and attracts them moſt. From this ſtriking ſingularity in the texture of ſuperior minds, the deſcriptions of Thomſon are all alive,

alive, ardent, and glowing throughout. Every thing poſſeſſed his fancy, and ſeized the congenial affections of his heart, as endowed with ſenſible qualities. He animates the winds, the rains, the dews, the elements, and all the various phenomina of nature, with a lively and ſentimental enthuſiaſm. His figuring the diſmal *waſte*, as liſtening to the wild notes of the *Plover*, for inſtance, is a ſtroke ſingularly happy and natural, and, which none but a genius highly poetical could have hit. The ſolemn ſtillneſs which often affect us, in ſuch ſolitary and romantic ſituations, is what moſt probably ſuggeſted this fine idea. The abruptneſs with which he perſonifies the different *Seaſons*, as they make their reſpective approaches, has not paſſed without cenſure. But this figure, ſo dear to rhetoricians, and degraded by pedantry, has ſomehow acquired too much imaginary dignity and importance forſooth, to be ſuitably introduced, till the mind has been formally prepared for its reception. It ſtrikes me as an obvious and juſt reflection, that man is the ſame preciſe and finical being in all ſituations, and that the ſame mental peculiarity tinctures literature, which prevails in life. Our language at leaſt, catches a certain ſtarchneſs and formality, as ſoon as our manners degenerate from ſimplicity and nature. In both reſpects, truth and vigour are exchanged, for frippery and poliſh. I never peruſed a ſyſtem of Rhetoric or Poetry, in

which all the various images and forms of ſpeech are ſpecifically claſſed, and have their different and peculiar places and functions aſſigned them, in my life, which did not alſo put me in mind of an Evening Entertainment or Ball, where the ſtiffeſt animal in the group generally preſides, and adjuſts with infinite conſequence and ceremony, the rank and precedence of the Ladies, pairs the Belles and the Beaux, according to equipage and inclination, leads up the Dance, and gives law to the whole temporary ſplendour, without heſitation, and without controul. Could we diſpoſſeſs our minds of ſyſtem but for a moment, we might ſoon be ſatisfied that all this parade, claſſical not leſs than ſocial, is the mere offspring of art, in the formation and tendency of which, Nature has not the ſmalleſt concern. With what coolneſs are morning and evening, night and day, as well as the different ſeaſons of the year, without any preparation whatever, and in common with a thouſand other things, perſonified, by almoſt every Poet who has occaſion to mention them. So that our Poet's introduction to *Summer*, inſtead of having *violently the air of writing mechanically and without taſte*,* is with all due ſubmiſſion, to one of our beſt Critics, extremely natural and beautiful. That is, it ſtrikes me as ſuch.

* Elements of Criticiſm, vol. ii. page 248.

But

But let every one judge for themſelves. Here it is.———

> From bright'ning fields of æther fair diſclos'd,
> Child of the ſun, refulgent *Summer* comes.
> In pride of youth, and felt through nature's depth,
> He comes attended by the ſultry hours,
> And ever-fanning breezes on his way;
> While from his ardent look, the turning *Spring*
> Averts her baſhful face, and earth, and ſkies,
> All ſmiling, to his hot dominion, leaves.

Vision, or apoſtrophe, is the imaginary preſence of abſent beings, and predominates in all its exceſs, in the intervals of reaſon, as in the caſe of dreaming or madneſs. Fancy, for the wiſeſt ends, has the power of ſubſtituting chimeras, in the place of reality; and it is no trifling ingredient in the ſuffering, and enjoyment of humanity, that the mind is thus often a dupe to her own fictions. We are literally the children of illuſion, but have the leſs ground of complaint that they are full as frequently for, as againſt us. In the ſimpleſt narration, as well as in the dramatic repreſentation of paſt events, we are ſtrangely diſpoſed to conſider ourſelves as preſent, and to picture the various ſcenes on which our attentions reſt, however long elapſed, as paſſing in immediate review before us. So that neither is this figure always improper, but when the paſſions are inflamed. Take an example

in

in point, from Autumn, for which poor Thomſon, as uſual, has been tried and caſt with a vengeance.

Say then, where lurk the vaſt eternal ſprings,
That, like creating Nature, lie conceal'd
From mortal eye, yet with their laviſh ſtores
Refreſh the globe, and all its joyous tribes?
O thou pervading Genius, given to man,
To trace the ſecrets of the dark abyſs,
O lay the mountains bare! and wide diſplay
Their hidden ſtructure to th' aſtoniſh'd view!
Strip from the branching Alps their piny load;
The huge incumbrance of horrific woods
From Aſian Taurus, from Imaus ſtretch'd
Athwart the roving Tartar's ſullen bounds!
Give opening Hemus to my ſearching eye,
And high Olympus pouring many a ſtream!
O from the ſounding ſummits of the north,
The Dofrine hills, thro' Scandinavia roll'd
To fartheſt Lapland and the frozen main;
From lofty Caucaſus, far-ſeen by thoſe
Who in the Caſpian and black Euxine toil;
From cold Riphean rocks, which the wild Ruſs
Believes the * ſtony girdle of the world;
And all the dreadful mountains, wrapt in ſtorm
Whence wide Siberia draws her lonely floods;
O ſweep th' eternal ſnows! Hung o'er the deep,
That ever works beneath his ſounding baſe,

* The Muſcovites call the Riphean mountains Weliki Camenypoys, that is, the great ſtony Girdle; becauſe they ſuppoſe them to encompaſs the whole earth.

Bid

Bid Atlas, propping heaven, as Poets feign,
His ſubterranean wonders ſpread! unveil
The miny caverns, blazing on the day,
Of Abyſſinia's cloud-compelling cliffs,
And of the bending * Mountains of the Moon!
O'er-topping all theſe giant ſons of earth,
Let the dire Andes, from the radiant line
Stretch'd to the ſtormy ſeas that thunder round
The ſouthern pole, their hideous deeps unfold!
Amazing ſcene! Behold! the glooms diſcloſe,
I ſee the rivers in their infant beds!
Deep, deep I hear them, lab'ring to get free!
I ſee the leaning ſtrata, artful rang'd;
The gaping fiſſures to receive the rains,
The melting ſnows, and ever-dripping fogs.
Strow'd bibulous above I ſee the ſands,
The pebbly gravel next, the layers then
Of mingled moulds, of more retentive earths,
The gutter'd rocks and mazy-running clefts;
That, while the ſtealing moiſture they tranſmit,
Retard its motion, and forbid its waſte.
Beneath th' inceſſant weeping of theſe drains,
I ſee the rocky Siphons ſtretch'd immenſe,
The mighty reſervoirs, of hardened chalk,
Or ſtiff compacted clay, capacious form'd.
O'erflowing thence, the congregated ſtores,
The cryſtal treaſures of the liquid world,
Thro' the ſtirr'd ſands a bubbling paſſage burſt;

* A range of mountains in Africa, that ſurround almoſt all Monomotapa.

And welling out, around the middle ſteep,
Or from the bottoms of the boſom'd hills,
In pure effuſion flow.———

THE exceptions frequently made to this paſſage, are in my opinion, a ſingular inſtance of that ſtrange inflexibility, which in ſome minds equally deadens the affections, to all the charms of nature and art. What a vaſt and marvellous ſcene has the muſe of Thomſon, thus happily and accurately diſcloſed. Into how many deep and awful caverns does he penetrate, and what a rich variety of original imagery teem on his view, while he unravels the myſteries of the deep, and points out the various windings of the watery world! He enters on the deſcription of a contrivance ſo wonderfully adapted to the numerous exigencies of nature, and nature's works, full of aſtoniſhment at the ſagacity and extent of thoſe powers of thought and intelligence from which her moſt hidden and intricate energies, *have no covering*. This philoſophical inveſtigation from beginning to end, is not leſs richly embelliſhed, than juſtly executed. His mind evidently labours under the weight of the ſubject, while he traces the *rivers* to their ſource, and delineates their origin, with all the aids of ſcience, and all the graces of poetry. Vivacity in compoſition, depends more, perhaps, on a proper uſe of interrogation, than

than of any other rhetorical or poetical figure whatever. In this pointed manner, the enquiry commences, which imparts propriety and ſpirit, to every ſubſequent idea. The whole paſſage is a lively and pathetic addreſs to the *Genius* of philoſophy, who for that purpoſe is perſonified, and ſuppoſed an attentive ſpectator of that amazing operation and proceſs, by which rivers and openings, thus emerge from the bowels of the earth, and communicate a freſh ſupply of water to the ſurface. So that giving exiſtence to fiction in this particular inſtance, and figuring ſo happily an immediate ſolution of the difficulties propoſed, is a ſpecimen of poetical machinery, that in truth, does credit to his Genius.

Thus in reviewing the defects of the *Seaſons*, I have purpoſely mentioned, whatever occured to me in extenuation of them. What heart, conſcious of its own frailty, would not tremble to arraign with ſeverity, and without alleviation thoſe of others. There is no doubt, after all, but Readers will take the ſame liberty I do, and praiſe or blame, juſt as the Author, or paſſage, happens to pleaſe, or diſguſt them. From ſuch, I am certain, Thomſon has nothing to fear, and with them I leave him implicitly. There are others, who ſet their own feelings aſide, and appeal to I know not

what, antiquated abſtractions, for a ſanction to their opinions. Theſe, to borrow the language of the *Bar*, are by much the moſt exceptionable part of his jurors, and I wiſh only to prevent their having a vote in the verdict againſt him, as they are by no means whatever, his peers.———

THESE ſentiments, in conjunction with others of a ſimilar nature, are happily countenanced, by an authority, not inferior to any in the Engliſh language. And, I conclude this tedious Chapter with his opinion, in a caſe directly to the purpoſe; whoſe uncommon delicacy of taſte, laid no reſtraint whatever, either on the generoſity of his temper, or the gentleneſs of his heart. *A true Critic*, ſays Addiſon, *ought to dwell rather upon excellencies than imperfections, to diſcover the concealed beauties of a writer, and communicate to the world ſuch things as are worth their obſervation. The moſt exquiſite words, and fineſt ſtrokes of an Author, are thoſe which very often appear the moſt doubtful and exceptionable to a man who wants a reliſh for polite learning; and they are thoſe which a ſour undiſtinguiſhing Critic, generally attacks with the greateſt violence. Tully obſerves, that it is very eaſy to brand or fix a mark upon what he calls* verbum ardens, *or, as it may be rendered into Engliſh, a glowing bold expreſſion, and to turn it into ridicule by a cold ill-natured criticiſm. A little wit is equally capable of expoſing a beauty, and of aggravating a fault;*

and

and though ſuch a treatment of an Author, naturally produces indignation in the mind of an underſtanding Reader, it has however its effect, among the generality of thoſe whoſe hands it falls into, the rabble of mankind being very apt to think that every thing which is laughed at with any mixture of wit, is ridiculous in itſelf.

CHAP. V.

On the Object of the Seaſons.

——————————Attend,
Whoe'er thou art, whom theſe delights can touch,
Whoſe candid boſom the refining love
Of nature warms, O! liſten to my ſong;
And I will guide thee to her favourite walks,
And teach thy ſolitude her voice to hear,
And point her loveliſt features to thy view.

THE exchange of verbal, or rather polemical, for what may be called ſentimental criticiſm, creates ſenſations ſimilar to ſuch as ariſe from the recent abſence of poſitive pain. Our track has been hitherto uneven, perplexed, and tedious, but we are now arrived at the extremity ſo long in view. The fatiguing part of the tour is over, and all to come, is eaſy, inviting, and delightful.

ALL mankind, in all ages, in all countries, in all characters, have unanimouſly ſtarted in the purſuit of pleaſure. To be ſatisfied with ourſelves, is the primary and reigning propenſity of the human heart. And the ultimate perfection, accounts ſufficiently for this part of our ſyſtem. We indulge it accordingly, in the ſame wild and irregular variety,

riety, which marks the different habits and complexions of our minds. The Idler, has his object in lounging, the miſer in hoarding, the ambitious in climbing, and the prodigal in waſting. This is that wonderful and inexplicable inchantment, which has produced every metamorphoſis that chequers the annals of humanity ſince the world began; which ſtill maintains an unlimited ſovereignity over life and manners, and, by which the heart of man has been dragged through ſo many ſcenes, flung into ſo many tranſports, and plunged into ſo many perplexities.

From the various and ſtrange phenomena of this kind, which the hiſtory of individuals in conjunction with that of ſociety exhibits, I have ſometimes, raſhly enough perhaps, imagined, that the deſire of pleaſure might be equally eſſential to the being, and well-being, of the mental, as that of proper aliment, is to the corporeal part of our frame. Curioſity, at leaſt, which is the great acting ſpring in all intellectual improvements, derives its origin and elaſticity, from this conſtitutional impulſe. And, the benevolent and wiſe diſpoſitions of Providence, are not more obvious in any thing whatever, than that we do not more naturally breathe, than our affections go out after objects of a certain caſt and quality. The moment we open our eyes around us, averſion or complacency, are ſenſations inſeparable from whatever we behold or feel. As

if the various objects of perception were commiſſioned by ſome benignant, but inviſible being, to warn us, what we ſhould avoid and purſue, and endowed for that purpoſe with a language, which the human heart inſtinctively underſtands.

Whether it is, that we find it neceſſary to fly from ourſelves, and ſhun the mortifying ſuggeſtions of reflection?——Whether the merciful Author of our beings, to promote that activity and diligence on which our felicity ſo eſſentially depends, has graciouſly annexed certain agreeable ſenſations to every degree of exertion?——Whether to convince us, how extremely inadequate all our preſent acquiſitions are, to the innate breathings, and conſcious exigences of a rational and immortal principle; it might not be deemed neceſſary in the formation of a conſtitution ſo delicate and multifarious, thus to bribe us with the proſpect of pleaſure in the diſcharge of our duty?——In ſhort, whether one or other, or all of theſe, be the cauſe of this univerſal *ſtimulus* in human nature, it is not poſſible, perhaps, for us to determine; nor, would it anſwer any valuable purpoſe though we could. The reality of the fact, is the chief thing connected with our preſent ſpeculations. And, taking that for granted, the queſtion is, Does the *Seaſons* of Thomſon, or do they not, contribute to that effect? I will anſwer, by an appeal to every perſon of taſte who has read them, whether they do not preſent

preſent us with many maſterly paintings of nature, which neceſſarily charm in the image, as well as in the original. Indeed, the variations and degrees of beauty are infinite, and our Author has enriched his poem with almoſt every excellence that the exterior of creation affords.

THERE is hardly any one ſo abſolutely dull as not to reliſh, as not to be charmed with the inexpreſſible ſweetneſs and delicacy of nature, in thoſe months of the year, when ſhe appears to moſt advantage. Even winter clothes her in mourning, not in deformity, and like the faireſt of her offspring, ſhe is then only ſo much the more lovely and affecting for being in tears. Some indeed, want ears, others have but very imperfect eyes, and what is a more deplorable defect than either, many ſeem to have no heart; but here the fault lies not in what may be called the ſubject, but in the medium and powers of ſenſation. It would appear, however, that nature has eſtabliſhed a very ſtrong and palpable correſpondence, between every thing amiable, elegant, and beautiful in the ſtructure and ſcale of her works, and certain feelings in the human heart. And we derive no inconſiderable ſhare of innocent and unmoleſted enjoyment, as well as the greateſt utility, from the unavoidable exerciſe of all our perceptive faculties.

To this ſtrange myſterious and ſympathetic harmony, by which the fineſt ſenſations of mind and

faireſt

faireſt forms and aſſemblages of things, are ſo happily and ſweetly united, the muſe of Thomſon was conſtantly attuned. He knew well how his own heart was charmed, and he loved mankind too ſincerely, and underſtood their nature too thoroughly, not to believe them poſſeſſed of the ſame ſenſibility. Read but his *Seaſons*, from end to end, and inſpect the agreeable workings of your own feelings, as you proceed. A ſingle peruſal of his poem in this manner, will give you a juſter idea of his merit, than all that language can expreſs in his praiſe. What a ſtriking and rich exuberance of ſentimental imagery and ideas, mark, embelliſh, and exalt his ſimpleſt narrations. How finely does he recall to our memories, in terms equally competent and pictureſque, all thoſe tepid vapours, embroiled ſkies, and fragrant exhalations, which indicate the vigour of reviving nature.—But his enthuſiaſm flames out with more than ordinary ardour and vehemence in delineating the rural ſimplicity, and ideal innocence of what has been ſo frequently called the golden age. And, who knows not, that to ſuch imaginary pictures of felicity, we owe many of the moſt delightful paſſages in modern, not leſs, than in ancient poetry. For abſolute perfection in all the finer feelings, ſofter virtues, and ſympathetic affections of humanity, in conjunction with the full poſſeſſion of every ſocial convenience, and every ſocial enjoyment, however repugnant to fact, and

experience, is ſtill one of the moſt raviſhing and inchanting fictions that lays hold on the fancy.

The firſt freſh dawn then wak'd the gladdened race
Of uncorrupted man, nor bluſh'd to ſee
The ſluggard ſleep beneath its ſacred beam:
For their light ſlumbers gently fum'd away;
And up they roſe as vigorous as the ſun,
Or to the culture of the willing glebe,
Or to the chearful tendance of the flock.
Meantime the ſong went round; and dance and ſport,
Wiſdom and friendly talk, ſucceſſive, ſtole
Their hours away: while in the roſy vale
Love breath'd his infant ſighs, from anguiſh free,
And full replete with bliſs; ſave the ſweet pain,
That inly thrilling, but exalts it more.
Nor yet injurious act, nor ſurly deed,
Was known among thoſe happy ſons of Heaven;
For reaſon and benevolence were law.
Harmonious nature too look'd ſmiling on.
Clear ſhone the ſkies, cool'd with eternal gales,
And balmy ſpirit all. The youthful ſun
Shot his beſt rays, and ſtill the gracious clouds
Drop'd fatneſs down; as o'er the ſwelling mead,
The herds and flocks, commixing, play'd ſecure.
This when, emergent from the gloomy wood,
The glaring lion ſaw, his horrid heart
Was meekened, and he join'd his ſullen joy.
For muſic held the whole in perfect peace:
Soft ſigh'd the flute: the tender voice was heard,
Warbling the varied heart; the woodlands round

Apply'd

Apply'd their quire; and winds and waters flow'd
In conſonance. Such were thoſe prime of days.

THERE is but little merit in mere negative deſcription. It is much eaſier, at leaſt, in moſt caſes, to ſay what is not, than what is. For the abſence of thoſe things which fill us with regret, is a convenient enough reſource for materials to complete a deſign, when nothing better is at hand. Aware of this circumſtance, our Poet, from what in theſe degenerate days life is not, happily figures what then it muſt have been. Several ideas in this account ſhew, either that he had his eye on a celebrated paſſage in Milton, or, that they both copied the ſame original. I do not mean, by the quotation, to contraſt their merit. The reader may do that or not, as he pleaſes, but the productions of two ſuch maſters of their art, where the thought is materially the ſame, muſt be entertaining. What a pity their ears were not as ſimilar, as their genius. Thus run the Miltonian meaſures:

So paſs'd they naked on, nor ſhunn'd the ſight
Of God or Angel, for they thought no ill:
So hand in hand they paſs'd, the lovlieſt pair
That ever ſince in love's embraces met;
Adam the goodlieſt man of men ſince born
His ſons, the faireſt of her daughters Eve.
Under a tuft of ſhade that on a green
Stood whiſpering ſoft, by a freſh fountain ſide

They

They ſat them down; and after no more toil
Of their ſweet gard'ning labour, then ſuffic'd
To recommend cool zephyrs, and made eaſe
More eaſy, wholeſome thirſt and appetite
More grateful, to their ſupper-fruits they fell,
Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs
Yielded them, ſide-long as they ſat recline
On the ſoft downy bank damaſk'd with flowers:
The ſavory pulp they chew, and in the rind
Still as they thirſted ſcoop the brimming ſtream,
Nor gentle purpoſe, nor endearing ſmiles
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance as beſeems
The fair couple link'd in happy nuptial league,
Alone as they. About them friſking play'd
All beaſts of th' earth, ſince wild, and of all chaſe
In wood or wilderneſs, foreſt or den;
Sporting the lion ramp'd, and in his paw
Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
Gambol'd before them; th' unwieldy elephant
To make them mirth us'd all his might, and wreath'd
His lithe proboſcis; cloſe the ſerpent fly
Inſinuating, wove with gordian twine
His breaded train, and of his fatal guile
Gave proof unheeded; others on the graſs
Couch'd, and now fill'd with paſture grazing ſat,
Or bedward ruminating, for the ſun
Declin'd was haſting now with full career
To th' ocean iſles, and in th' aſcending ſcale
Of heav'n, the ſtars that uſher evening, roſe.

It ſometimes happens, in adjuſting the rank of fine Writers, as it does in deciding on the compa-

rative excellence of particular characters, in public or private life; inferior, is often loſt in the dazzling ſplendour of ſuperior merit. Few Moderns, diſcover ſo much of that true poetic fire, which in all the genuine ſons of Apollo, burns with a lambent, but inexhauſtible flame, as Dr. Beattie. To which of the ſofter tones of nature is not his muſe happily and peculiarly reſponſive. With ſtrong creative powers, a lively and rich ſenſibility of heart, and a taſte delicately turned, for catching the ſymmetry and ſublimity of things; his ſtrains are full of ſimplicity and elegance, ſometimes riſe to a majeſty and grace, but ſeldom to be found in the poetry of the age. The following part of a ſtanza from his *Minſtrel*, has often charmed me; and I will venture to produce it, as not out of time, after all the flowers of *Parnaſſus*, with which both Thomſon, and Milton, have adorned the ſame idea.

Sweet were your ſhades, O ye primeval groves,
Whoſe boughs to man his food and ſhelter lent,
Pure in his pleaſures, happy in his loves,
His eye ſtill ſmiling and his heart content.
Then, hand in hand, health, ſport, and labour went.

THERE is not perhaps, a Poet in our language, who worſhips ſo devoutly, and in a manner ſo rational and manly, at the ſhrine of female beauty as Thomſon does. Senſible of its inexpreſſible energy

on

on the maſculine mind, he exhibits it in all its virgin charms, and brings it forth poliſhed and complete, an exquiſite model of ſymmetry and excellence. His pathetic addreſs to Amanda, ſhews how deeply he felt the perfection of the object deſcribed.

> And thou, Amanda, come, pride of my ſong!
> Form'd by the graces, lovlineſs itſelf!
> Come with thoſe downcaſt eyes, ſedate and ſweet,
> Thoſe looks demure, that deeply pierce the ſoul,
> Where, with the light of thoughtful reaſon mix'd,
> Shines lively fancy and the feeling heart:
> O come! and while the roſy-footed May
> Steals bluſhing on, together let us tread
> The morning dews, and gather in their prime
> Freſh blooming flowers, to grace thy braided hair,
> And thy lov'd boſom that improves their ſweets.

His picture of a flower garden, is drawn with matchleſs delicacy and ſpirit. Here every thing is arranged in the beſt order, and aptly diſtinguiſhed by its right name, its proper place, and its true colouring. His muſe, like the genius of the ſpot he delineates, wherever ſhe alights, intermingles the beauties of nature and art, with equal animation and taſte, produces a world of ideas, not leſs elegant than new, and breathes a profuſion of flowers and herbs, and ſweets, and ſcents, and all manner of fruits. So that whoever can read this pictureſque ſketch, without feeling a moſt ſenſible delight, may

may well enough be compared to *a ſtatue* in the midſt of the Graces, ſurrounded with all the luxuries which the fineſt ſoil, and the fineſt ſeaſon can produce.

At length the finiſh'd garden to the view
Its viſtas opens, and its alleys green.
Snatch'd thro' the verdant maze, the hurried eye
Diſtracted wanders; now the bowery walk
Of covert cloſe, where ſcarce a ſpeck of day
Falls on the lengthen'd gloom, protracted ſweeps:
Now meets the bending ſky; the river now
Dimpling along, the breezy ruffled lake,
The foreſt darkening round, the glittering ſpire,
Th' ethereal mountain, and the diſtant main.
But why ſo far excurſive? when at hand,
Along theſe bluſhing borders, bright with dew,
And in yon mingled wilderneſs of flowers,
Fair-handed ſpring unboſoms every grace;
Throws out the ſnow-drop, and the crocus firſt;
The daiſy, primroſe, violet darkly blue,
And polyanthus of unnumber'd dyes;
The yellow wall-flower, ſtain'd with iron brown;
And laviſh ſtock that ſcents the garden round:
From the ſoft wing of vernal breezes ſhed,
Anemonies; auriculas, enrich'd
With ſhining meal o'er all their velvet leaves;
And full ranunculas, of glowing red.
Then comes the tulip-race, where beauty plays
Her idle freaks; from family diffus'd
To family, as flies the father-duſt,
The varied colours run; and, while they break

On

On the charm'd eye, th' exulting floriſt marks,
With ſecret pride, the wonders of his hand.
No gradual bloom is wanting; from the bud,
Firſt-born of ſpring, to ſummer's muſky tribes:
Nor hyacinths, of pureſt virgin white,
Low-bent, and bluſhing inward; nor jonquils,
Of potent fragrance; nor Narciſſus fair,
As o'er the fabled fountain hanging ſtill;
Nor broad carnations, nor gay-ſpotted pinks;
Nor, ſhower'd from every buſh, the damaſk-roſe.
Infinite numbers, delicacies, ſmells,
With hues on hues expreſſion cannot paint,
The breath of Nature, and her endleſs bloom.

In ſhort, the ſpringing of plants,——the early budding of every tender thing,——the ſprouting ſtems,——the verdure of the fields,——the fragrance of riſing herbs,——the foliation of trees,——the ſun's returning warmth,——prolific rains,——foſtering breezes,——vernal dews,——the pairing of animals,—— young ones of all kinds,——the ſinging of birds,——the *paſſion of the groves*, the influence of *Spring*, on the human heart,——connubial attachment,——and domeſtic bliſs: are all ſubjects naturally calculated to charm the fancy, and intereſt the paſſions; and their taſte muſt be faſtidious indeed, who acknowledge not, that Thomſon does them more than ordinary juſtice.

He views and celebrates, the *approach of Summer, in ſtrains ſingularly lively and enchanting. It ſeems as if an idea of advancing maturity, had

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* I have ſeen a manuſcript poem called the *Seaſon*, deſcribing one of our ſummer *Watering Places*, from which the Author has indulged me with the following extract. As it is ſomewhat in the manner, though by no means an exact imitation of Thomſon, I give it to the publick merely as a curioſity.

Deck'd in ſweet flowrets, lo! the ſeaſon comes:
And o'er the heath, with ſullen ſtrides and ſlow,
Winter reluctant ſcowls away. The ſpring,
In all her virgin gaiety and pride
Now drops her veil. Aurora ſtands confeſs'd
The ſwarthy empreſs of the "circling year!"
Mild and majeſtic, are the lovely forms
Which hail in ſofteſt bluſhes her approach!
All nature feels her touch, and hears her voice,
And with increaſing warmth and vigour, lives.
The fields reviving in her preſence ſmile,
And put forth all their charms. Each flow'ry bud
Unfolds a thouſand hues, a thouſand ſcents,
Which blended, fan the air with rich perfume,
And gratify the ſight. The gurgling brook,
More ſmoothly, winds its way down ſloping dales,
And fills the neighb'ring haunts with ſweeter ſounds.
The oaks lift up their lofty heads, and fling
Their ſhaggy arms, with negligence abroad.
Each little hill, in vernal ſweets abounds,

fired his muſe with a new acceſſion of alacrity and joy. Invocation is the trite reſource of the moſt deſpicable rhymſters, but that of Thomſon to *Inſpiration*, is marked with an ardour and originality, truly characteriſtic of genius.

Come *Inſpiration!* from thy hermit ſeat,
By *mortal* ſeldom found: may fancy dare,

And every bank its beſt embroid'ry wears.
The groves, frequented by the feather'd race
In luxury of dreſs to pleaſe, their gueſts
Appear ſuperlatively gay. And all
The laughing vallies round expreſs
In chaſte confuſion what they inly feel.
The green turf cheers the eye. From yonder wood
What dulcet notes in wild profuſion riſe,
And waft ſoft muſic on the trembling ear?
At morn, e'er yet the drowſy world awake,
Or buſy life inceſſant toil renew,
Quick from the ſun, a flood of glory burſts
Which fills with red magnificence the heavens,
The cold earth, warms; exhales the balmy dew;
Impregnates every thing with life; revives
And cheers the human heart. Nor do yon clouds
Pour all their moiſture on the yawning glebe
At random. Nature regulates the whole:
By her command they drink their liquid ſtores,
And drop down fatneſs in prolific rains.
The very winds bring Summer *on their wings*
And all our teeming hemiſphere diſcharge
Of noxious vapours and pernicious fog.
* * * * * * * * * * * *

From thy fix'd ſerious eye, and raptur'd glance
Shot on ſurrounding Heaven, to ſteal one look
Creative of the poet, every power,
Exalting to an extaſy of ſoul.

It is hard to conceive any ideas more appoſite and lively than thoſe by which, he marks the joyous appearance of the ſun. He clothes this glorious object in the moſt magnificent and majeſtic ſplendor. The ſhades of darkneſs, and all their concomitant horrors, fly every where before him, and the horizon kindles into one beauteous and univerſal blaze, as he riſes and flings his beams abroad. Thomſon's addreſs on this occaſion is manly, pathetic, and natural.

But yonder comes the powerful king of day,
Rejoicing in the eaſt. The leſſening cloud,
The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow
Illum'd with fluid gold, his near approach
Betoken glad. Lo! now apparent all,
Aſlant the dew bright earth, and colour'd air,
He looks in boundleſs majeſty abroad;
And ſheds the ſhining day, that burniſh'd plays
On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wandering ſtreams,
High gleaming from afar. Prime chearer Light!
Of all material Beings firſt and beſt!
Efflux divine! Nature's reſplendent robe!
Without whoſe veſting beauty all were wrapt
In uneſſential gloom; and thou, O Sun,

Soul

Soul of ſurrounding worlds! in whom beſt ſeen
Shines out thy Maker! may I ſing of thee?

The thoughts in the following deſcription are all ſtrictly philoſophical, at the ſame time that they owe much of their beauty to poetry. And it is difficult to ſay which deſerves moſt praiſe, the juſtneſs of the idea, or the elegance of the expreſſion. The myſterious and prodigious powers of attraction, by which the *Sun*, as centers of the ſyſtem, pervades, unites, and directs the whole, fill the poet's imagination with aſtoniſhment and tranſport. Indeed the communication of light and life to the whole planetary worlds that roll in everlaſting rotation around us, as it is one of the moſt wonderful operations, of nature is a conception equal to the boldeſt exertions of the human intellect. And on this occaſion our author adopts it with propriety.—The ſolar orb, or throne, in ſolemn proceſſion with the *ſeaſons*, the *hours*, the *rains*, the *dews*, the *zephyrs*, and even the *ſtorms* mingling in his train—the mineral beds penetrated by his rays, and ripening by degrees into a rich variety of metalline ore—the very rocks impregnated by his prolific beams producing the moſt precious diamonds, and the whole ſmiling creation gratefully acknowledging his dominion—are a few of the leading circumſtances that heighten this piece of

exquiſite painting. Inſtead of a more particular analyſis of the paſſage take it intire.

'Tis by thy ſecret, ſtrong, attractive force,
As with a chain indiſſoluble bound,
Thy ſyſtem rolls entire: from the fair bourne
Of utmoſt *Saturn*, wheeling wide his round
Of thirty years; to *Mercury*, whoſe diſk
Can ſcarce be caught by philoſophic eye,
Loſt in the near effulgence of thy blaze.
Informer of the planetary train!
Without whoſe quick'ning glance their cumbrous orbs
Were brute unlovely maſs, inert and dead,
And not, as now, the green abodes of life!
How many forms of being wait on thee!
Inhaling ſpirit; from th' unfettered mind,
By thee ſublim'd, down to the daily race,
The mixing myriads of thy ſetting beam.
The vegetable world is alſo thine,
Parent of *Seaſons!* who the pomp precede
That waits thy throne, as thro' thy vaſt domain,
Annual, along the bright ecliptic road,
In world-rejoicing ſtate, it moves ſublime.
Mean-time, th' expecting nations, circled gay
With all the various tribes of foodful earth,
Implore thy bounty, or ſend grateful up
A common hymn: while, round thy beaming car,
High-ſeen, the *Seaſons* lead, in ſprightly dance
Harmonious knit, the roſy-finger'd *Hours*,
The *Zephyrs* floating looſe, the timely *Rains*,

Of

Of bloom ethereal the light-footed *Dews*,
And ſoftened into joy the ſurly *Storms*.
Theſe, in ſucceſſive turn, with laviſh hand,
Shower every beauty, every fragrance ſhower,
Herbs, flowers, and fruits; till, kindling at thy touch,
From land to land is fluſh'd the vernal year.
Nor to the ſurface of enlivened earth,
Graceful with hills and dales, and leafy woods,
Her liberal treſſes, is thy force confin'd:
But, to the bowel'd cavern darting deep,
The mineral kinds confeſs thy mighty power.
Effulgent, hence the veiny marble ſhines;
Hence Labour draws his tools; hence burniſh'd War
Gleams on the day; the nobler works of Peace
Hence bleſs mankind, and generous Commerce binds
The round of nations in a golden chain.
The unfruitful rock itſelf, impregn'd by thee,
In dark retirement forms the lucid ſtone.
The lively Diamond drinks thy pureſt rays,
Collected light, compact; that, poliſh'd bright,
And all its native luſtre let abroad,
Dares, as it ſparkles on the fair one's breaſt,
With vain ambition emulate her eyes.
At thee the Ruby lights its deepening glow,
And with a waving radiance inward flames.
From thee the Sapphire, ſolid ether, takes
Its hue cerulean; and, of evening tinct,
The purple-ſtreaming Amethyſt is thine.
With thy own ſmile the yellow Topaz burns.
Nor deeper verdure dyes the robe of Spring,
When firſt ſhe gives it to the ſouthern gale,
Than the green Emerald ſhows. But, all combin'd,

Thick thro' the whitening Opal play thy beams;
Or, flying ſeveral from its ſurface, form
A trembling variance of revolving hues,
As the ſite varies in the gazer's hand.
The very dead creation, from thy touch,
Aſſumes a mimic life. By thee refin'd,
In brighter mazes the relucent ſtream
Plays o'er the mead. The precipice abrupt,
Projecting horror on the blackened flood,
Softens at thy return. The deſart joys
Wildly, thro' all his melancholy bounds.
Rude ruins glitter; and the briny deep,
Seen from ſome pointed promontory's top,
Far to the blue horizon's utmoſt verge,
Reſtleſs, reflects a floating gleam. But this,
And all the much-tranſported Muſe can ſing,
Are to thy beauty, dignity, and uſe,
Unequal far; great delegated Source
Of light, and life, and grace, and joy below!

In Gray's poſthumous letters we find a deſcription of the riſing ſun, to which there is hardly a parallel in our language. The editor quotes a ſimilar one from an old Engliſh Divine, which, for the time when it was wrote, is wonderfully beautiful indeed! It ſtrikes me, however, as too minutely laboured to make any great and laſting impreſſion. That from the Poet awakens in the mind, ſenſations of grandeur and ſimplicity, correſponding with ſuch as we feel from an immediate view of the original, but that from the Preacher rather ſuggeſts a

compariſon than communicates a pleaſure. The one is taken from the object while its image was yet freſh and glowing on the writer's fancy, and poſſeſſes the heart intire; the other is a mere cloſet-production, compoſed from the gleanings of memory, and only pretty enough to afford imagination ſome temporary amuſement. The ſcene of the former is on the ſea-ſhore; the latter is connected with no ſpecific circumſtance whatever to give it energy.

I ſaw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great ſmoaky wreathes, and the tide, as it flowed gently in upon the ſands, firſt whitening, then ſlightly tinged with gold and blue; and all at once a little line of inſufferable brightneſs, that, before I can write theſe five words, was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be diſtinctly ſeen.

GRAY.

As when the ſun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he firſt opens a little eye of heaven, and ſends away the ſpirits of darkneſs; gives light to the early, and calls up the lark to matins, and, by and by, gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eaſtern hills, thruſting out his golden horns—and ſtill, while a man tells the ſtory, the ſun gets up higher, till he ſhews a fair face and a full light.

TAYLOR.

The ſetting, as well as the riſing ſun, is at the ſame inſtant a ſource of the ſweeteſt and ſublimeſt conceptions

conceptions that can enter into the mind of man. Who has not then frequently ſeen him in the ſofteſt and moſt majeſtic luſtre, plunging among piles or columns of broken and burniſhed clouds, as if he meant by

Arraying with reflected purple and gold
The clouds that on his weſtern throne await,

to make thoſe he leaves in darkneſs the more ſenſibly regret his abſence? The various circumſtances of this glowing but common ſcene are noted in the following lines, with elegance and ſimplicity.

Low walks the ſun, and broadens by degrees
Juſt o'er the verge of day. The ſhifting clouds
Aſſembled gay, a richly gorgeous train,
In all their pomp attend his ſetting throne.
Air, earth and ocean ſmile immenſe. And now
As if his weary chariot ſought the bowers
Of *Amphitrite*, and her tending nymphs,
So Grecian fable ſung, he dips his orb,
Now half immers'd; and now a golden curve
Gives one bright glance, then total diſappears.

Thoſe objects, which are moſt familiar to us, have often a very pleaſing effect in deſcription. It flatters perhaps our ſelf-love to find ſuch things as have frequently attracted our attention, thus repreſented with ſimplicity and juſtneſs. In truth, by a careful inſpection of our mental faculties, we

may ſoon be ſatisfied, that whatever facilitates or aſſiſts their general or reſpective operations, creates a certain degree of delight. We have no pleaſure, and it is proper for obvious reaſons that we ſhould have none, but in exerciſe; and theſe are always and uniformly of the ſame complexion with the powers exerted. Such as reſult intirely from the gratification of appetite are low and brutal; the indulgence of certain paſſions produce others more refined; but intellectual enjoyments are moſt ſubſtantial of all. In poliſhed life, the fine arts is one of many mediums by which this laſt and pureſt ſpecies is acquired. And imagination and memory, are as much charmed, with an elegant and maſterly exhibition of old or familiar objects, as the underſtanding is with new or occult ones. So that we naturally congratulate ourſelves in the poſſeſſion of every acceſſion to ſcience, in proportion to the eaſe or facility with which it is acquired. Thus, in the preſent inſtance, recollection is partly, if not wholly, ſuperſeded, and the mind, without any ſenſible retroſpection, repleniſhed with ideas and images perfectly conſonant to her own experience. In the paſſage I ſhall now quote, there is a beautiful ſelection of circumſtances, that muſt frequently have ſtruck the attention of every obſervant mind in the leaſt acquainted with rural affairs. The ſcene, though ſingularly homely and

common,

common, is ſo full of the moſt natural ſimplicity, that there is no reading it without a peculiar degree of ſatisfaction.—The cows lowing and lounging about the doors to be fed and milked,—the lazy and languiſhing poſition of the birds, as they perch among the boughs of the neighbouring trees,—the convenient and cool retreat of the domeſtic poultry,—the dreaming of the dogs till ſtung and ſtartled by the waſp,—are all ſo finely conceived, that a painter has only to give them form and colouring. The deſign is fairly finiſhed, and all the figures happily arranged and grouped to his hand.

Home from his morning taſk, the ſwain retreats;
His flock before him ſtepping to the fold:
While the full udder'd mother lows around
The chearful cottage, then expecting food,
The food of innocence and health! The daw,
The rook and magpie, to the grey-grown oaks
That the calm village in their verdant arms,
Shelt'ring embrace direct their lazy flight;
Where on the mingling boughs they ſit embower'd,
All the hot noon, till cooler hours ariſe.
Faint, underneath, the houſhold fowls convene;
And in a corner of the buzzing ſhade,
The houſe-dog with the vacant grey-hound lies
Outſtretch'd and ſleepy. In his ſlumbers one
Attacks the nightly thief, and one exults

O'er

O'er hill and dale; till waken'd by the waſp,
They ſtarting ſnap.——

Of the ſame kind are many of his beſt and moſt elaborate deſcriptions. The wonderful artifice and machinery by which the ſpider compaſſes his bloody deſigns is finiſhed with inimitable propriety and exactneſs. Perhaps the paſſage might be quoted as an example of the pathetic, as well as agreeable. For the heart is a ſharer in the ſympathy it occaſions, as well as the fancy in the pleaſure it affords.

But chief to heedleſs flies the window proves
A conſtant death; where, gloomily retir'd,
The villain ſpider lives cunning and fierce,
Mixture abhorr'd! Amid a mangled heap
Of carcaſes, in eager watch he ſits,
O'erlooking all his waving ſnares around.
Near the dire cell the dreadleſs wanderer oft
Paſſes, as oft the ruffian ſhews his front,
The prey at laſt enſnar'd, he dreadful darts,
With rapid glide along the leaning line;
And fixing in the wretch his cruel fangs,
Strikes backward grimly pleas'd: the fluttering wing
And ſhriller ſound declare extreme diſtreſs,
And aſk the helping hoſpitable hand.

In ſhort, his whole Summer abounds with the moſt faſcinating delineations of nature. Whatever

is

is moſt charming, rural and luxuriant in that exuberant and fertile ſeaſon, is marked in the moſt brilliant and glowing characters.—The morning, mid-day and afternoon of a Summer day,—the annals of the inſect tribes,—rural buſineſs, economy and amuſement,—the ſhades, thickets and parts which afford a ſalutary retreat from the noon-tide ſun,—groups of flocks and herds as they browze on the banks of rivers and brooks,—the foaming *ſteed* overleaping the encloſure and plunging in the deep,—grottoes, groves and alcoves in all their pleaſing penſive horrors,—the noiſy cataracts,—Summer raging in the torrid zone,—the coming evening, glowing meteors, and all the beauteous images and vapoury gleams which generally accompany departing light, are fruitful in deſcription as well as in nature, to poetical minds, at leaſt, of the moſt pleaſing, the moſt lively, and the moſt romantic impreſſions.

The obvious tendency of nature is to make all her works complete, and all her children happy. *Spring*, like youth, is the period of hope; and *Summer*, like manhood, matures the deſires then imbibed; but *Autumn* is the great period of fruition, where all our toils and proſpects terminate, where all our wiſhes are realized, and where poſſeſſion ſupplants the anxieties of expectation.

We

We are conſcious in every undertaking of a very ſtrong propenſity to finiſh, as well as to begin. Under the influence of this idea the proſecution of all our purpoſes commences and is conducted. There is a certain degree of ſatisfaction inſeparable from our minuteſt efforts, which, by the conſtitution of things, is thus held forth as the natural and hereditary reward of our labours. Our mental, as well as corporeal make, is originally formed for activity, and conſequently furniſhed with abundance of ſprings for keeping it in motion. The more we employ our ſenſes as inſtruments of intelligence, they neceſſarily grow the more expert and acute. Indeed, we poſſeſs no power which is not ſuſceptible of improvement; and, what is more, which we are not born with diſpoſitions to improve. Indolence of every kind is adventitious to our natures, and ariſes ſolely from habits of debility and ignorance: juſt as in our bodies one diſeaſe perpetually engenders another; for the nervous, like the ſocial ſyſtem, grows the ſtronger, the more it is braced. And all the flights of imagination, but eſpecially all the acquiſitions of the underſtanding, happily and amply repay themſelves. This gives vigour and effect to every liberal exertion, fills the mind with confidence in the inſtant of deſigning, and fires the heart with courage and alacrity from firſt to laſt through the whole execution.

Poſſeſſed

Poſſeſſed of ſome ſuch ideas as theſe, Thomſon wrote, and we ſhould read and digeſt this part of his poem. Here perfection and fruition, which in the ſcience of man are two words expreſſing but one idea, make the *burthen of his ſong*. And how finely does he exhibit the genius of univerſal nature, as having thus finiſhed the work to which all the ſeaſons in their turn are reſpectively ſubſervient. For this purpoſe they ſeem conſtant only in diſcloſing one continual round of viciſſitude and variety. Nature dies but in *Winter*, to revive and flouriſh in *Spring*; and her vigorous complexion in *Summer* is but a prelude to her maturity in *Autumn*. Then, how ſoon and ſeverely do we not all ſee and feel a moſt material and affecting change. Is not that endearing and univerſal charm, which flattered our ſenſes and warmed our hearts, ſo fully and ſweetly but a little ago, already and for ever irrecoverable? What a pale, and ghaſtly, and withered aſpect darkens and deflowers every proſpect we behold! Where now that refreſhing gloſs, that beauteous bloom, and thoſe delightful ſcenes, that invited us to the country, and on which we feaſted ſo deliciouſly in ſolitude! Are not the operations of nature ſenſibly ſuſpended by ſome inviſible power, and her various offspring apparently infected by the momentary decay of their mother? How mute and diſpirited the tuneful tribes that were wont to

chear

chear us with their chirruping, and to chant in wanton extacy their evening and their morning carols to the raviſhed ear. The fields every where relinquiſh their former verdure and luxury, the leaves all over the woods drop faſt from the trees, the whole vegetable world hangs its head in deſpondency, the air reſigns its genial ſoftneſs and warmth, the day ſhortens in proportion as the ſun declines, and the darkneſs and *length* of the night increaſe as the earth grows chilly and the atmoſphere cool. Such, O man, is the fleeting nature and unalterable deſtiny of all thy preſent enjoyments! Does not pleaſure in every form, as if inſtinctively, ſhrink from thy chaſteſt touch? The pureſt bleſſedneſs of which thy heart is ſuſceptible fades inſenſibly away, and frequently dies in the very inſtant of fruition. Which of all thy attachments has not, by ſome unaccountable fatality inſeparable from the warmeſt ebullitions of ſenſibility, fermented the general bitterneſs of thy fate? Thus, the objects of thy beſt and deareſt affections, as well as thoſe of thy ſenſes, are in a ſtate of perpetual viciſſitude and change; and, like ill-treated gueſts, ſtart from thy fondeſt embraces, and leave thy heart to ſuffer infinitely more exquiſitely in their abſence than ever it enjoyed in their preſence. Ah! how deceptive thoſe endearments, which, in the momentary ſenſa-

tions they produce, ſow the ſeeds of eternal regret.

It was natural for our Poet, in ſuch a train of ſentimental thinking, to be ſtruck with the general and apparent felicity that prevails in the preſent impaired ſtate of ſociety. He could not help reflecting, that men were not always thus cordial, thus convenient, thus happy, and his philoſophic muſe ſeizes, with ſingular felicity, on that very period, when the arts of life, and chiefly of agriculture, began firſt to be cultivated. For, ſtrange as it may ſeem, men never turn their thoughts to huſbandry, till, by ſome means or other, they find themſelves in full poſſeſſion of peace, independence, and plenty. But, when once the bleſſings of regular ſociety are thus accumulated, they generally, and, in every country under heaven, diſcover a number of internal and inexhauſtible reſources which they knew not before. Such is the wiſe deſtination of Providence, that as there is no end of human toil, neither is there any limits to human acquiſition. Nor is it leſs inſtructive than curious to obſerve with what acuteneſs and ſagacity he traces the progreſs, influence, and object of *induſtry*; what preciſion is every where mingled with the chaſteſt delicacy; what a happy luſtre he throws on the hiſtory of civil ſociety, and what an intimate acquaintance he diſcovers with the nature of the human

man mind, in all her various ſtages of improvement. How complete the picture he gives of the earth under the culture and tuition of human ſkill! how different from thoſe inhoſpitable ſolitudes which are ſtill the dreary habitations of ſavage barbarity and rudeneſs!

——— Attempered ſuns ariſe
Sweet beam'd, and ſhedding oft through lucid clouds
A pleaſing calm; while broad, and brown below
Extenſive harveſts hang the heavy head,
Rich, ſilent, deep, they ſtand; for not a gale
Rolls its light billows o'er the bending plain;
A calm of plenty, 'till the ruffled air
Falls from its poiſe, and gives the breeze to blow,
Rent in the fleecy mantle of the ſky,
The clouds fly different; and the ſudden ſun
By fits effulgent gilds the illumin'd field,
And black by fits the ſhadows ſweep along.
A gayly checker'd heart expanding view,
For as the circling eye can ſhoot around,
Unbounded toſſing in a flood of corn.

His deſcription of the *ſhipping* on the Thames is in perfect uniſon with theſe ideas. Were it aſked, what is the moſt aſtoniſhing inſtance of human ingenuity, which is the greateſt miracle of art, or which of all our inventions are moſt remote from chance, inſtinct, or neceſſity, the principal attributes of natural agency; could we refer to any

thing ſo juſtly as the wonders of navigation? A *ſcience* by which we ſubdue the moſt boiſterous elements, and mould them to purpoſes of univerſal utility, walk with ſafety on the waves of the ſea, ride at our eaſe on the wings of the wind, unite the moſt diſtant extremities of the earth, and compaſs the whole terraqueous globe, without ſetting a foot on land, by only going out at one point and coming in at another. Hence a *fleet* in full ſail is one of the fineſt ſpectacles or exhibitions in the whole circle of art. Our different ports abound more with ſights of this kind than all the other ports of the world. Nothing indeed ſtrikes a foreigner on approaching the Engliſh capital with ſo much ſurpriſe, as the infinite number and variety of veſſels which cover the River, like a large wood of old oak ſtript by ſome hurricane of their branches and foliage. This buſy, complicated, and teeming groupe of things, is depicted by the hand of a maſter in the following numbers:

——————— On either hand,
Like a long wintry foreſt, groves of maſts
Shot up their ſpires; the bellying ſheet between
Poſſeſs'd the breezy void, the ſooty hulk
Steer'd ſluggiſh on; the ſplendid barge along
Row'd, regular, to harmony; around,
The boat, light-ſkimming, ſtretch'd its oary wings;
While deep the various voice of fervent toil

From

From bank to bank increas'd, whence ribb'd with oak,
To bear the Britiſh thunder black, and bold,
The roaring veſſel ruſh'd into the main.

Happy they who, far from public commotions, repoſe themſelves in the placid boſom of independence and tranquillity, who are ſatisfied with eaſe and competence, and who poſſeſs a fund of enjoyment in the attachment of a few worthy friends, and the approbation of their own hearts, which the world at large can neither afford nor allow. Let ſuch only as are impelled by neceſſity forego the endearments of retirement. What has the delirium of a court, the frippery of faſhion, the dull repetition of pleaſures that pall the appetite, the fantaſtic predilection for places of public reſort, that often terminates in the ruin of domeſtic felicity, to compenſate for the want of thoſe bleſſings which in the village ſo frequently charm the heart, and give new reliſh to exiſtence. Truſt me, ye whoſe minds are yet pure from the debilitating infection of luxury and licentiouſneſs, there is nothing in all the great or gay world to augment, but much to diminiſh your happineſs. Here oppoſite intereſts and oppoſite paſſions engender endleſs and univerſal contention. For the fiends of ſocial unanimity muſt do infinite miſchief where they have infinite room. But yours is that humble and

ſequeſtered vale which the rough winds of heaven ſeldom or ever viſit. There, are no objects of emulation, no bait for the covetous, nothing to tempt the aſpiring, or irritate the invidious, to ſtimulate luxury, inflame the paſſions, or poiſon the heart. One would imagine, from the general turn of the work, that Thomſon's poem was intended chiefly to recommend a country life in preference to that of the town. With how much judgment and delicacy does he not ſelect whatever, at a diſtance from the buſtle of buſineſs and the circle of intrigue, is moſt dear and captivating to the ſenſes? How enchanting and romantic the ſtrains in which he delineates the various ſcenes of uncultivated nature and genuine ſimplicity which the different ſeaſons of the year produce? The gathering of fruits is one of thoſe juvenile paſtimes which awakens all the tenderneſs and vivacity of his nature. And his invitation to a taſk in which the youth of both ſexes mingle with ſo much artleſs ſenſibility and attachment, and where the heart is ſo often feaſted with the pureſt and chaſteſt of all ſenſations, is perfectly in time, and happily marks the ſubject of his poem, while it ſoothes and delights the affections of his readers.

Ye ſwains now haſten to the hazel bank;
Where, down yon dale, the wildly winding brook

Falls

Falls hoarſe from ſteep to ſteep. In cloſe array,
Fit for the thickets and the tangling ſhrub,
Ye virgins come. For you their lateſt ſong
The woodlands raiſe; the cluſtring nuts for you
The lover finds amid the ſecret ſhade;
And where they burniſh on the topmaſt bough,
With active vigour cruſhes down the tree;
Or ſhakes them ripe from the reſigning huſk,
A gloſſy ſhower and of an ardent brown,
As are the ringlets of Melinda's hair.

Nothing is more deſcriptive of *Autumn*, or fills the penſive mind with a greater variety of tender and ſoft ſenſations, than the view of an orchard while the fruit is a falling. This idea the poet dilates minutely. And it is obvious from ſeveral ſtrokes in the paſſage, that few profeſſed Naturaliſts have ſtudied and traced the various energies and effects of vegetation with more attention and ſucceſs than he did. His mind was finely turned for comprehending the eſſence, connections, and influence of things. In him the love of nature was literally a ſource of ſcience. Her fair idea poſſeſſed every feeling of his heart, and operated like a ſpring on all his poetical and ſpeculative powers. He admired her in the moſt groteſque forms. He took and followed her implicitly wherever ſhe led. Not even thoſe latent and myſterious principles by which the reſpective fruit

of her ſeveral productions ſhoot up into maturity eſcape his penetration. While his aim ſeems only to entertain, the moſt important leſſons of inſtruction are obliquely ſuggeſted. In truth, his muſe ſingles out nothing from the vaſt multitude of materials that lies open to her inſpection which is not replete with food for the underſtanding, as well as pleaſure for the heart.

Obedient to the breeze and beating ray,
From the deep loaded bough a mellow ſhower
Inceſſant melts away. The juicy pear
Lies, in ſoft profuſion, ſcatter'd round.
A various ſweetneſs ſwells the gentle race,
By Nature's all refining hand prepar'd;
Of temper'd ſun, and water, earth and air,
In ever changing compoſition mixt.
Such falling frequent thro' the chiller night,
The fragrant ſtores, the wide projected heaps
Of apples, which the luſty handed year,
Innumerous, o'er the bluſhing orchard ſhakes.
A various ſpirit, freſh, delicious keen,
Dwells in their gelid pores; and active points
The piercing cyder for the thirſty tongue.

There is a ſomething which the ſenſes recogniſe, and which affects the heart with tranquillity in this period, juſt as ſtriking to imagination as it is difficult to expreſs. Nature appears to have exhauſted all her energies in ripening the product of

the year, and like a grateful mother, after a happy deliverance, ſilently rejoices over the fruit of her womb. A certain liſtleſsneſs then enervates and ſeems to poſſeſs the univerſal principles of things. It is impoſſible to look around us on this occaſion without indulging correſpondent ſenſations. A ſimilar laſſitude or relaxation pervades the human frame, tinctures the temper with melancholy, and huſhes the heart into a calm. Compoſure and confidence ſeem the language or inſpiration of the *Seaſon*. For every thing whiſpers in the ſweeteſt accents, that the world is ſtill under a government peculiarly kind and benign. To ſuch a ſtate of mind, and with the nobleſt deſign, the poet addreſſes himſelf in theſe emphatical verſes. It ſhews, as uſual in his caſe, of what true genius is capable, under the management of pure intentions.

Mean-time light ſhadowing all, a ſober calm
Fleeces unbounder ether, whoſe leaſt wave
Stands tremulous, uncertain where to turn
The gentle current: while illumin'd wide,
The dewy-skirted clouds imbibe the ſun,
And thro' their lucid veil his faſten'd force
Shed o'er the peaceful world. Then is the time
For thoſe whom wiſdom and whom nature charm,
To ſteal themſelves from the degenerate croud,
And ſoar above this little ſcene of things;

To

To tread low thoughted-vice beneath their feet;
To ſooth the throbbing paſſions into peace;
And wooe lone quiet in her ſilent walks.

Many of the animal world ſurvive not the fall of the year, and others ſeem affected with the ſame temporary languor which then ſeizes the whole lifeleſs creation. But chiefly the feathered tribes undergo, in that period, a kind of annual renovation. Groupes of them are ſeen flocking together indiſcriminately, equally forgetful of their former animoſities, diſtinctions, and attachments. Then is the ſeaſon of their moulting, when moſt of them change their plumage; when the appetites of the moſt ſavage abate of their fierceneſs, and when the moſt loquacious and muſical among them, are juſt as mute and dull as the reſt. Such a pictureſque circumſtance as this the muſe of Thomſon never omits. It was congenial to that elevated tone of ſenſibility in which all his ſentiments were conceived, his ideas digeſted, and his images ſelected.

Haply ſome widow'd ſongſter pours his plaint,
For, in faint warblings, thro' the lowing copſe,
While congregated thruſhes, linnets, larks,
And each wild throat, whoſe artleſs ſtrains relate,
Swell'd all the muſic of the ſwarming ſhades,
Robb'd of their tuneful ſouls, now ſhivering ſit

On

On the dead tree, a dull deſponding flock,
With not a brightneſs waving o'er their plumes,
And nought ſave chattering diſcord in their notes.

Every thing in the whole circle of the *Seaſons* having thus acted its part, the great concluding ſcene arrives, which realizes the hopes of the huſbandman, and crowns his labour with ſucceſs. He has nothing now to apprehend from gnawing inſects, noxious dews, parching heats, ſhaking winds, or rotting rains. Plenty of proviſion is laid up for man and beaſt, toil for the preſent is at an end, and the heart no longer ſuſpended between the different palpitations of uncertainty and expectation, relaxes into joy. Thus gratitude, like all other natural propenſities, operates ſometimes inſtinctively. For enjoyment uniformly produces an agreeable mixture of tranſport and vivacity; and every ſpecies of gladneſs that originates from poſſeſſion ultimately refers to the great Benefactor of the univerſe. In many caſes the human heart ſeems to recogniſe the bounteous indulgence of Heaven, in the ſame manner that the vegetable and brute creation do the energy of nature. The tender buds, and ſhoots, and bloſſoms, which adorn the fields and woods in ſpring, are not more ſpontaneous than ſuch ſenſations of happineſs, as the gratifications of appetite produce in animal,

and the completion of deſire in rational natures. Food to the hungry, and drink to the thirſty, are attended with feelings correſponding, though inferior to thoſe which the diſcovery of ſcience produces in the ſpeculative, or the acceſſion of new excellence in the moral faculties. And we then act in concert with the general harmony of things when the genuine ebulitions of a glad heart join the voluntary chorus of nature, in ſolemn acknowledgments to that great and ſovereign principle of benignity and life, on whom we depend for whatever we can wiſh or enjoy. Theſe expreſſions of a generous and cheerful temper are leſs or more inſeparable from the reception of benefits, but peculiarly common among peaſants about the latter end of *Autumn*. And Thomſon celebrates the feſtive ſcenes which in this manner ſhut up the year with equal ſimplicity, beauty, and truth.

—— Looſe to feſtive joy, the country round
Laughs with the loud ſincerity of mirth,
Shook to the wind their cares. The toil ſtrung youth,
By the quick ſenſe of muſic taught alone,
Leaps wildly graceful in the lively dance.
Her every charm abroad the village toaſt,
Young, buxom, warm, in native beauty rich,
Darts not unmeaning looks; and, where her eye
Paints an approving ſmile, with double force,

The

The cudgel rattles, and the wreſtler twines.
Age too ſhines out, and garrulous recounts
The feats of youth. Thus they rejoice; nor think
That, with to-morrow's ſun, their annual toil
Begins again the never-ceaſing round.

The junction of a ſtrong genius and a fine taſte gives moſt original productions, ſuch an equal degree of perfection in all their parts, as renders a juſt ſelection of their ſuperior beauties no eaſy taſk. To the few which ſtrike me in this light, the following might be added:—The fields waving with ſtakes of yellow corn——the reapers entering on their cheerful toil——the harveſt ſtorm——the ſportſman's barbarous delight——the retreats of genius——the vintage——the origin of rains, fogs, fountains, and rivers——the migrations of birds——the *ſtork* aſſembly——a patriotic panegyric—*Argyle* and *Forbes* gratefully mentioned——an addreſs to the genius of philoſophy——his account of the lunar eclipſe——an *ignus fatuus* deſcribed——an idea of ſolitude or abſtraction from the world——the genuine love of nature.——To quote theſe however, and other paſſages of a ſimilar kind at full length, would carry me far beyond my intention, which is not ſo much to compile a new book, as to awaken the attention of the age to the excellence and utility of an old one.

Thomſon

Thomſon is generally thought to have ſucceeded better in his Winter than in any other of his *Seaſons*. But, may not this preference ariſe as much from the temper of the reader, as from any inequality in the poem. Melancholy ideas, we all know, are congenial to the human mind. All our faculties and aptitudes are ſuited to our preſent ſituation, and who has not felt, that this is a ſcene of ſuffering, not of enjoyment. The circumſtances we now poſſeſs are ſtrangely affecting and perilous. Equally impelled by the inſtigations of appetite on the one hand, and the reſtraints of reaſon on the other, we are more frequently the ſport of both than in due ſubjection to either.—*Infancy* is loſt amidſt a multitude of toys, tender anxiety and abortive labour.—*Youth* amidſt the dreams of fruition, the viſionary elyſiums of imagination, and the teaſing inquietudes of love.—*Manhood* amidſt the viciſſitudes of fortune, the requiſitions of futurity, and the tortures of diſappointment,—and *Age* amidſt all thoſe accumulated pangs, perplexities, and ills which ſhade and ſadden the lateſt ſtages of humanity. Is not every thing around us viſibly haſtening to ſome grand and general revolution, in which we are all ſenſibly and eſſentially concerned? What in the living or lifeleſs world is not thus in a ſtate of change and declenſion? Whence thoſe dreadful caverns and hollow bowels that ſap the foundation

foundation and impair the ſtrength of rocks apparently impregnable and everlaſting? thoſe bleak and ſhaggy fronts that ſhed around them the gloomy indications of approaching ruin? There is, in truth, no thinking on our preſent ſituation,—what we are,—where we are,—and whether deſtined, without indulging a thouſand ſerious and anxious reflections. To us the annals of the world, and of human nature, are altogether enigmatical: The ſucceſſion of one generation after another is juſt as uniform and regular as that of the ſeaſons. Are not our anceſtors, what we ſhall ſoon be, all ſwept from the records of the living, ſave a few, here and there, who, friendleſs and diſpirited, like the ſcattered remains of a foreſt after ſome dreadful ſtorm, are left alone to bend under the rage of misfortune, and look wiſtfully around for the wonted partners of their hearts in vain. And, alas! how little calculated is all we poſſeſs or can poſſeſs beneath the ſun, to repell the mortifying impreſſion of theſe ideas. Is not the ſweetneſs of every thing within the reach of our ſenſes very much impaired by the unavoidable inequalities of the human mind, the perpetual intruſions of care, the intervals of health, and the myſterious diſpenſations of Providence? The truth is, apart from mental, moral and religious improvement, all our preſent enjoyments are ſo ſuperficial, ſo limited, ſo few, that a very ſhort time

time is ſufficient to taſte them all. What follows is but a repetition of the ſame draught, which, from want of novelty, a cloyed appetite, and an inſipid taſte, becomes at laſt vapid and nauſeous. Nor are the boaſted reſources of ſociety leſs precarious and fantaſtical. How very rarely do we meet with a ſelect aſſociation of friends preciſely to our liking. We muſt even put up with ſuch company and converſation as we find, nor, on any occaſion whatever, expect to find juſt ſuch as we wiſh. And they are ſingularly fortunate indeed, whoſe characters are not often miſtaken, whoſe intentions have not been miſrepreſented, whoſe foibles are not frequently magnified into unpardonable crimes, and whoſe company is not ſometimes avoided even by ſuch as they moſt love. So that what between noiſy petulance and peeviſh acrimony, the bitter ribaldry of detraction, and haughty deciſions of preſumption, friendſhip ſacrificed to the ſurmiſes of envy, truth ſuppreſſed by the fictions of malignity, ſelfiſhneſs waddling in the form of patriotiſm, and piety the publick pandar of the moſt abject and mercenary minds, all our preſent ſatisfactions amount to no more than *vanity and vexation of ſpirit.* Wherever we caſt our eyes among the grave, the gay, the idle or the active, the ſame romantic levities, the ſame incorrigible follies and the ſame frivolous amuſements are in vogue. Nor is there

any

any thing ſo durable in the whole circle of human affairs as a certain predilection in favour of ſome new extravagance. Does not pride uniformly lord it over humility, and extend her oppreſſions wherever luxury rears her wanton front? In what quarter of the globe do not the ſtrong prey on the weak, and all condemn or applaud as fortune ebbs or flows? How commonly are the poor treated by the rich with contempt, and the rich by the poor with petulance, perfidy and rudeneſs? In which of all our politeſt circles is not decency often put to the bluſh by frantic giddineſs, inſipid buffoonery, the childiſh puerilities of faſhion, or the empty formalities of affectation? Are not many of the beſt minds early and induſtriouſly poiſoned with an inordinate paſſion for ſplendid inſignificance, and deadened, by the ſavage manœuvres of cuſtom and impoſture, to the moſt beauteous emanations of mental worth? Who knows not, that the clamours of impudence, and ſtratagems of villainy, wax louder and thicker through all the different modifications of ſociety; that vice ſkulks in every diſguiſe that human artifice can put on, and that publick and private integrity is univerſally proſcribed. How aſtoniſhing, that the heart of man ſhould be ſo groſsly impoſed on as it is, with viſions, and phantoms, and dreams, thus utterly abſurd and ridiculous. Take but your eſtimate of

life, from thoſe rounds of extravagance and parade, which glow and glitter ſo inceſſantly at a diſtance, where luxury exhibits all her finery, and gaiety all her charms. In truth, a few individuals excepted, almoſt all the good-humour we ſee is aſſumed. Does not the levity of one party ariſe from mere novelty, the moſt capricious and ſhort-lived thing in the world; the giddineſs of another from a temporary extravagance, which ruſhes on the minds of mankind, in proportion as they loſe the power of thinking; and what is the delirium of a third but the guſts of inordinate paſſion, or ſtill more likely the fumes of intemperance. But, Oh! how vapid and hollow muſt that ceremony be, which is not the language of a warm heart! how inſipid thoſe ſmiles, which indicate no internal pleaſantry; how aukward thoſe graces, which ſpring not from habits of good nature and benevolence. Even here, with all that art and impudence can do to keep folly in countenance, in this ſame fantaſtic circle of troubleſome equipage, gaudy apparel, high rank, and titles of diſtinction, the moſt ſerious thoughts will at times obtrude themſelves. And, no wonder, a few melancholy, moralizing ſpirits, who neither live, nor think, nor feel like others, grow peeviſh and moroſe by ruminating in the ſhade, when the merrieſt of all this jovial and joyful fraternity ſometimes

times catch the vapours, and hear, or think they hear, an officious echo thus whiſpering in their ear:

Go, airy triflers, flutter life away;
Crown with the mantling juice the goblet high,
Weave the light dance, with feſtive freedom gay,
And live your moment, ſince the next ye die.

The manifold freaks and foibles of the world are an everlaſting fund of the richeſt ridicule; and one half of mankind are reciprocally occupied in thus breaking their jeſts on another; but that aſtoniſhing and univerſal inundation of luxury and liſtleſſneſs, which characteriſes, ſo emphatically, the ſpirit of the times, ſuggeſts very different feelings to ſerious and ſentimental minds. Such was evidently the temper of our author, who, it is probable, ſeldom thought on the gayer ſcenes of life, without being put in mind, to borrow an image I know not from whom, of ſome mountains, which travellers tell us are covered with eternal verdure, while inextinguiſhable flames prey on their entrails. Thus the dazzling pageantry and pomp of life, which make ſo many frantic, ſeem to have touched him with very different emotions. He perceived, from his own, how impoſſible it is for thoſe of penſive and benevolent diſpoſitions to contemplate the apparent deformity of the moral world, and the

uncertain deſtiny which hangs over the heads of mortals, with uniform compoſure and reſignation. To this moping and moralizing temper of mind every paſſage of his *Winter* is finely adapted. How often is the human heart in ſuch a tone as to ſpurn at every ſpecies of comfort which is not adminiſtered with ſympathy and condolence? Our poet was too manly and generous, as well as too ſentimental and humane, to ſneer at the delicate diſtreſſes of imagination. He knew from experience, that however capricious in their cauſes, they generally produce the moſt lamentable and laſting uneaſineſs. And to their tendereſt ſenſibilities his kindred and affectionate muſe is every where reſponſive. Does he not purpoſely introduce whatever has a tendency to calm the troubled mind, and ſoothe the aching heart? For this reaſon, he dwells moſt on ſuch things as a fickly fancy generally prefers; and ſuch is his benignity and addreſs, that without uttering a ſyllable repugnant to his feelings, he changes her bitterneſs into joy, and from thoſe very objects that filled her with dreary deſpair, extracts a ſource of the ſweeteſt and ſublimeſt conſolation.

We are at beſt but very ſhort-ſighted in the eſſence and origin of things, have indeed no knowledge at all but of final cauſes. Why that which ſhocks in nature ſhould ſo frequently pleaſe in de-

ſcription, has hitherto baffled the keeneſt inveſtigations of philoſophy, and probably ever will. The workings of imagination have a ſubtilty and delicacy in them, which no penetration can trace, which no language can explain. There is, however, an obvious propriety in the fact. Were there no ſuffering, there could be no enjoyment; vice and virtue is but the ſame medal reverſed, and pain ſeems not leſs eſſential to the harmony of life than pleaſure. We are formed, indeed, to receive no ſatisfaction of any kind, which is not ſome how affected, ſeaſoned, or heightened by contraſt. Nor is the heart ſo ſenſibly touched or wrought on by any tones as thoſe which have an equal number of *ſharps* and *flats*. So that by thus comparing the image of the poet with its original in nature or memory, the double idea, like counter-parts of the ſame tune, produces quite a different and new ſenſation. And, ſuſceptible of the beauties of art, as well as of thoſe of nature, which of us has not ſeen a very fine deſcription of a very ugly object. Bleak winds, rainy weather, ſleets and froſts, and all the variety of gelid forms, which the benumbing colds of *Winter* aſſume, are of this kind. From theſe we ſuffer much, and yet are not diſpleaſed to ſee them well deſcribed.

How comfortable the conſideration, that we ſeem deſigned for quite another purpoſe, than po-

ring, with a moping and melancholy curioſity, on the darkeſt ſide of things. In truth, things have no dark ſide at all, but what they derive from the vicinity of a cloudy and diſtempered imagination. The external beauties of nature are finely adapted to charm and invigorate the heart, to fill the mind with vivacity and chearfulneſs, and to prevent this moſt affecting and diſmal of all calamities. Nor are the *Muſes* ever ſo well employed as in thus befriending humanity, ſmoothing the rugged paths of mortality, and beſtrewing them with roſes. For poetry has not only the power of enriching the drieſt ſubject with elevated diction and melodious numbers, but tames the turbulence of paſſion, and exhibits, without diſguiſing the moſt diſagreeable objects, in colours equally beauteous, lively and intereſting. Thomſon does what he can to produce this propitious effect, to make every thing that comes within the circle of his deſcription the means of good humour, to keep our minds in the ſteady contemplation of whatever is moſt lovely and joyous, to awaken within us a ſeries of the moſt pleaſing feelings, and to eſtabliſh our hearts in habits of gladneſs and ſerenity. For this reaſon he exhibits nature under all her various forms and revolutions in the beſt light, and ſeldom allows the fancy a peep of any one thing, which does not either augment our comfort, or ſome how leſſon our hereditary ſtock of ſorrow.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

On the Originality of the Seaſons.

To ſuch the bounteous Providence of Heav'n,
In every breaſt implanting this deſire
Of objects new and ſtrange, to urge us on
With unremitted labour to purſue
Thoſe ſacred ſtores that wait the rip'ning ſoul
In Truth's exhauſtleſs boſom.———

WE have attempted in the preceding chapter an imperfect ſketch of the leading object to which the *Seaſons* of Thomſon are chiefly directed. The great and only general effect, which he ſeems moſt ſolicitous to produce in the minds of his readers, is a full acquieſcence in the economy, and a filial confidence in the Author of Nature. And he paints every part of the year, and every genial form that wakes, to the plaſtic energy of poetical enthuſiaſm, in colours peculiarly adapted to his purpoſe. He does not ſatisfy himſelf, however, with ſimply arraying the conceptions of others in a dreſs of his own. This contemptible ſpecies of plagiariſm, was not more beneath his genius than repugnant to his taſte. He had imme-

diate recourſe to nature for all his materials, and ſhe intruſted with confidence her ſecrets to his care. For however in other reſpects he ſhould offend againſt the eſtabliſhed dogmas of criticiſm, his poetry every where diſcovers the ſtrongeſt traits of originality. All his ideas, ſentiments and verſification ſeem peculiarly his own. There is a beautiful wildneſs in his numbers, unpoliſhed as they ſometimes are; a manlineſs and majeſty in his language, a decorum and ſpirit in his images, and a likeneſs in moſt of his deſcriptions, ſingularly new, inimitable and ſtriking. And what of all others is perhaps the moſt deciſive mark of a poetical mind, the objects he deſcribes, though frequently common and familiar, ſtrike us ſome how in a new light.

The human ſyſtem, like every other work of nature, is progreſſive, and arrives at perfection by imperceptible degrees. We are never thoroughly ſatisfied in our beſt acquiſitions, the largeſt proſpects ſtint not our views, the whole range of the ſenſes bound not our deſires. Some diſtant object in every poſſible poſition, breaks in upon our reſt, fires the heart with new ardour, and puſhes onward to new attainments. Wherever we direct our ſight or attention, novelty in a thouſand forms tempts our wiſhes and ſolicits our acquaintance. Thus impelled by a reſtleſs and inſatiable curioſity, we are

ſtill

ſtill making new experiments on every thing around us, indulging new feelings from every change that affects us, and accumulating new ideas from whatever comes within the ſphere of obſervation.

How happily does our poet adapt his deſcriptions to this ſtrange peculiarity in the human ſyſtem. He never overlooks our love of variety, nor fatigues the attention with a tedious and minute diſplay of one object. He knew in what a conſtant and curious alternation our beſt ſenſations ſucceed each other, and generally ſuits them all with delicacy and preciſion. And his felicity in blending a certain ſpicery of novelty with nature and truth, through all their various windings and gradations, is extremely uncommon. "*Thomſon*, ſays a writer already quoted, *in that beautiful deſcriptive poem, the Seaſons, pleaſes by the juſtneſs of his painting, but his greateſt merit conſiſts in impreſſing the mind with numberleſs beauties of nature in her various and ſucceſſive forms, which formerly paſſed unheeded*——"

Inattention, though the worſt is perhaps one of the moſt prevalent habits in the human temper. That ſuggeſts inſenſibility to circumſtances and things which tinctures the diſpoſition and manners of moſt men, not only plunges them into many inconveniences which they might otherwiſe have eſcaped, but deprives them of many pleaſures which they might otherwiſe enjoy. The whole aſpect of nature

ture is ſo full of meaning, teems with ſo many beauties, and exhibits ſuch a vaſt profuſion of unexpected varieties, that every ſenſation ſhe awakens contributes ſome how to human happineſs. In heaven above, and the earth beneath, ſtill ſome new object catches the wandering eye, and fills the contemplative mind with a freſh acceſſion of delight. Not a brook that murmurs as it runs, not a breeze that ruſtles among the branches, not a cow that lows on the plain, not a lamb that bleats and browzes on the hill, not a bird that neſtles and ſings among the buſhes, not a ſight we ſee, nor a ſound we hear, which addreſſes not every faculty of the ſoul and every feeling of the heart, in the ſimpleſt, ſweeteſt, moſt perſuaſive accents, and which diſcovers not ſome new quality, or creates ſome new ſenſation.

To Thomſon we are greatly indebted for thus employing his deſcriptive talents in rouſing imagination and the heart to that charming glaſs of novelty which ſparkles around us in the ſweeteſt luſtre, and ſheds a fragrance ſufficiently delicious to every ſenſe. His muſe in catering for her own pleaſure adminiſters to ours. He obviouſly deſpiſes every art, and even poetry itſelf, but in ſo far as it contributes to the embelliſhment, convenience, or comfort of life, and has either an immediate or oblique direction to make men wiſer, better and happier. He wiſhed them poſſeſſed of all the eaſe, tranquillity,

lity, and delight which their preſent condition affords, and to ſhare the bounties of Providence with liberality and gratitude. His conſtitutional temper, notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt ſenſibility, was originally cheerful, he had been long under the tuition of that philoſophy that gives its diſciples the maſtery of themſelves, and his poem is every where enriched with the natural ebullitions of a glad heart. To awaken in others a ſeries of ſentiments ſo grateful to his own mind, was no doubt one reaſon that ſet him about writing the *Seaſons*. And they will laſt as long as the language, a beautiful monument of benevolence as well as of genius.

There is no diſſipating the unthinking languor of ſtupidity, without producing certain emotions of ſurpriſe. And this can only be done in deſcription, by a delicate ſelection of ſuch circumſtances as are beſt calculated to ſtartle the fancy or ſtrike the heart. All new objects occaſion new feelings, and the effect uniformly correſponds with the cauſe. Whatever regards us with an inimical aſpect, awakens painful ſenſations, but things of a more friendly and generous appearance are accompanied with thoſe of a pleaſing and congenial nature. This in all the fine arts is a ſource of inexhauſtible beauty, and feeds imagination with an endleſs ſeries of the pureſt and moſt exquiſite delicacies. And the only difference be-

tween vulgar and elegant or enlarged minds is, that the latter have what the former want, a quick inſtinctive, habitual diſcernment, not only of every thing that affects them, but of every affection to which they are ſubject. To this fine principle original writers owe all their diſtinction. They perceive every object through a medium peculiar to themſelves, and are often blamed for their conceptions, with a partiality as barbarous and abſurd as that which ſhould inſtigate us to cenſure, or rather inſult the ſtrong for vanquiſhing the weak, or the ſwift for outrunning the ſlow. Indeed, they have ſeldom very little merit or demerit, either in the ideas which occupy their minds, or the feelings that agitate their hearts. Fancy is ſeldom a voluntary agent, but always and every where, as obſequious to the influence of novelty as an orb to the attraction of its ſphere. In this light Thomſon moves in a circle, and with a dignity and propriety wholly his own. His attachment to rural ſimplicity and romantic ſolitude, was early and ſingular. Scenes, where nature wantons in the wildeſt irregularity, were homogeneous to his mind. While yet a child he has been known to ſteal away from his little companions, who ſometimes found him ſtrolling all alone among brakes, thickets, the banks of ſtreams, and the ſides of hills; which even then ſeemed poſſeſſed

of

of ſome ſecret enchantment, which correſponded to the ſoft inexplicable movements of his riſing genius. From this ſauntering and penſive habit he acquired an aukwardneſs of manner which never forſook him, but ſecured an intercourſe with the eſſence and arrangement of things, which ſufficiently ſupplied his want of the graces * with

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* The following *Ode* to *Politeneſs*, occaſioned by the preſent popular ſyſtem of education, has been printed but not publiſhed, and I hope the Reader will not be diſpleaſed with ſeeing it here. My pretenſions to verſification, however, are not ſo ſanguine, as to ſubject me to much chagrin from its reprobation. But perhaps this form of addreſs, aukward and imperfect as it is on a ſubject ſo much in the *ton*, may yet have a better effect than any other. The truth is, it is nearly as good as I could make it; and though it ſhould be thought very *bad*, it is at leaſt not very *long*.

FIRST born of Truth! to mortals given,
An honorary gueſt,
Propitious progeny of Heaven,
Still bleſſing all, and bleſt!
O who would not thy preſence greet,
So yielding, affable and ſweet?
All Nature owns thy kind reſtraints,
And melts in harmony divine;
While every ſavage power relents,
In holy raptures round thy ſhrine.

O come,

an uncommon ſtock of ſenſibility and ſcience. Hence almoſt every paſſage in the *Seaſons*, how-

---

O come, with meekneſs in thine eye,
And kindneſs on thy tongue;
Inſpire the old with ſympathy,
With gentleneſs the young.
We know thee by thy complaiſance,
Thy claſſic taſte and attie ſenſe.
Theſe, truſt the Muſe, are richer things
Than pride can boaſt, or power beſtow;
Too honeſt for the courts of kings,
Too homely for the ſons of ſhew.

Sincerity, whete'er thou art,
Like ſome fair Cherub ſhines:
And round the ſentimental heart,
In fond affection twines.
Philanthropy, ſerene as even,
And candour undiſguis'd as Heaven;
Above ſuſpicion's low ſurmiſe,
Adorn thy mild majeſtic brow!
Hail thee! the wiſeſt of the wiſe,
And meekeſt of the meek below.

Ye comely forms, ye ſmiling airs,
Which on the Goddeſs wait:
O quaſh the barb'rous herd of cares,
Which murder mean and great.
He cannot harbour low born pride,
Who has politeneſs for his guide.
Ah! titles are but empty names,
The tinſel'd drapery of ſtate;

All

ever faulty in other reſpects, is equally replete with novelty and truth. It is well known that

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All that the riſing heart inflames,
But infamy perceiv'd too late.

Thou, Delicacy, charming maid,
So ſeldom to be found;
Where gaiety in looſe parade,
Her folly ſcatters round.
Child of an independent mind,
Thy votaries full often find,
Far from the ſplendid walks of taſte,
Veil'd in the ruſty garb of want;
With many ſilent woes oppreſs'd,
Yet Rudeneſs never knew thy haunt.

Hail Senſibility! with thee
The Graces all unite;
And in one gen'rous aim agree
To puniſh aukward ſpite.
Come, all ſuch ſentiments impart,
As give expanſion to the heart!
The magic of thy potent ſpell
Can well each friendly feeling raiſe,
The fiends of dark Detraction quell,
And give to merit all its praiſe.

See wealth of all her trapping bare,
Ambition lower the creſt;
And levity of vacant ſtare,
Still more and more unbleſt!
Inhuman anger, deadly hate,
Fluſh'd vanity of empty gait!

Poor

he was accuſtomed, even after he came to England, engroſſed as he then was, by the beſt com-

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Poor pique, the ſcorpion of the heart,
Dark ſpleen wrapt up in cloudy care;
Diſdain with her envenom'd dart,
Seek all one common fate to ſhare!

Weak man turns all his bliſs to gall,
By knaviſh artifice;
Fair as thou art, thou too muſt fall,
A victim to his vice.
Is not religion thus decreed,
By lank hypocriſy to bleed?
And while, with peſtilential eye,
Envy darts th' inſidious glance,
Who can her pointed ſtings defy,
Or hope to be polite by chance.

The empty coxcomb, ſpruce and prim,
The teſty teaſing prude;
However choak'd with courtly whim,
Are every thing but good:
Though affluence around them roll,
Still ſtarchneſs dubs the vulgar ſoul.
Internal meanneſs, what can hide?
All gorgeous pageantry of ſtate
Springs from the littleneſs of pride,
Makes worth ſuſpicious, ſinks the great.

Can ceremony charm the heart,
Or flatt'ry always pleaſe?

Who

pany, and familiar with the moſt ſhining characters of the age, to diſengage himſelf from them all, and frequent the moſt ſequeſtered and celebrated ſpots in the neighbourhood. There, if he felt no new emanations, or imbibed no new conceptions, he could recollect the old at his leiſure, wait the happy returns of genius, and catch the delightful afflatus of inſpiration. Then he muſed and philoſophiſed by turns on every proximate object and circumſtance, and ſeldom left the place till he had reduced the various thoughts and ſenti-

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Who then but fools would boaſt on art,
Which knaves perform with eaſe?
See vice her ſnaky fore-head rear!
And court the plaudit of a Peer!
Ah! what an hollow wag is he,
Stalking gigantic o'er the ſcene?
Repeating loud in plauſive glee
The ſiren ſong of pleaſures Queen.

The Graces, and the Graces ſtill
Compoſe his motley tale,
While poiſon from his luſcious quill
Our frantic youth inhale.
Whatever meets his putrid breath,
Is petrifi'd with inſtant death!
Behold how bluſhing Beauty mourns,
While Female Virtue hangs her head!
The free born Muſe indignant ſpurns,
And reprobates the ruffian Deed.

ments it ſuggeſted to a regular conſiſtency, if not to complete verſification. His mornings and evenings, eſpecially in compoſing the *Seaſons*, were generally ſpent in this manner. And to the reſolute and manly preference of ſuch innocent and rational amuſements he owes moſt of his fame. For this firſt and beſt of all his poems derives its chief popularity, not ſo much from the juſtneſs, of which few are competent judges, as from the beautiful novelty of his painting, of which all are ſenſible.

One would imagine the ſubject of the *Seaſons*, at firſt view, not the moſt ſuſceptible of invention. But what is it a truly original genius will not improve. Every thing is prolific of novelty in the hand of a Maſter. His ideas are not the crude conceptions of dulneſs, nor his ſentiments either the vapid yawning of a liſtleſs, or the inſignificant prattle of an empty heart. He generally plans intirely for himſelf, and always executes in a manner preceded by nothing ſimilar. The light he ſtrikes out is ſo ſingular, and withal ſo true, that we are equally pleaſed with what we never ſaw before, and ſurpriſed that we now only ſee it for the firſt time. Who, for example, till Virgil appeared, expected to find the fable of the Iliad capable of being thus beautifully diverſified with new elegance and truth. In like manner the metamorphoſes of Nature, through all the different ſtages of excellence, takes

place—

place—one animal aſſumes the form of another; the acorn ſtarts up into a full grown tree, and the inanimate creation, though apparently perfect, is in a ſtate of perpetual revolution and viciſſitude.—

In deſcriptive poetry, as in landſcape-painting, fancy has the fulleſt ſcope. Here, however, fiction does not conſiſt in feigning objects unknown to the ſenſes, but in embelliſhing them with colours, endowing them with qualities, connecting them by relations, and diſpoſing them in attitudes and groupes of which we have little or no acquaintance. In truth, ideal arrangements are endleſs. While our affections retain their uſual averſion to uniformity, the multifarious objects of our reſpective ſenſes and faculties muſt unavoidably admit of new combinations. This, like every other art, improves by practice. For the more a fertile imagination creates or fabricates, the exerciſe becomes the eaſier, new veins of verifimilitude are diſcloſed, and we may give over for want of patience or ſtrength, but not of materials. The human genius is ſo verſatile, and the original ſources of beauty ſo inexhauſtible, that every new inſpection of the moſt common and familiar phenomena of nature, diſcover a thouſand new variations, diſtinctions and reſemblances, at the ſame time that it opens up a multiplicity of avenues, where novelty wantons in all her charms, where ſcience diſplays her happieſt

attractions, where fancy is feaſted, and the heart in tranſport. Such is the ſituation in which Thomſon ſhines, and ſheds a luſtre around him, which few imitators of the ſame ſimple and genuine original have hitherto ſurpaſſed. And it has been affirmed in my hearing, by ſome in whoſe judgment I have the fulleſt confidence, and whoſe profeſſion and ſcience give them a right to ſpeak deciſively, that the pieces of *Pouſſin* are not more uncommon, exotic, and claſſical, the ſketches of *Loreneſe* more daring and ſublime, or the deſcriptions of *Titian* more happy, natural, graceful, varied and charming, than his. So that to a reader of taſte, who can reliſh nature in her rudeſt as well as in her moſt poliſhed and ſplendid ſhapes, it is hardly poſſible to mention a poem of the ſame extent that will furniſh him with as much novelty, or better reward a peruſal.—

It is not eaſy to conceive for what reaſon, but our critics in general, with all their drowſy and laborious commentaries, have been very ſparing in their attentions to Thomſon. The neglect, it may be thought, is the leſs injurious, that thoſe they have buried amidſt the greateſt piles of literature, are commonly the leaſt read. One however, and and not the leaſt eminent of his cotemporaries, mentions the Author of the *Seaſons* in terms ſo proper and polite, that I know not how to illuſtrate this

part

part of the ſubject better than by tranſcribing what he ſays——

" Thomſon was bleſſed with a ſtrong and co-
" pious fancy; he hath enriched poetry with a
" variety of new and original images, which he
" painted from nature itſelf, and from his own
" actual obſervations: his deſcriptions have there-
" fore a diſtinctneſs and truth, which are utterly
" wanting to thoſe, of poets who have only copied
" from each other, and have never looked abroad
" on the objects themſelves. Thomſon was ac-
" cuſtomed to wander away into the country for
" days and for weeks, attentive to, " each rural
" ſight, each rural ſound;" while many a poet
" who has dwelt for years in the Strand, has at-
" tempted to deſcribe fields and rivers, and gene-
" rally ſucceeded accordingly. Hence that nau-
" ſeous repetition of the ſame circumſtances;
" hence that diſguſting impropriety of introducing
" what may be called a ſet of hereditary images,
" without proper regard to the age, or climate, or
" occaſion in which they were formerly uſed.
" Though the diction of the *Seaſons* is ſometimes
" harſh and inharmonious, and ſometimes turgid
" and obſcure, and though in many inſtances, the
" numbers are not ſufficiently diverſified by diffe-
" rent pauſes, yet is this poem on the whole, from
" the numberleſs ſtrokes of nature in which it a-

" bounds, one of the moſt captivating and amu
" ſing in our language, and which, as its beauties
" are not of a tranſitory kind, as depending on
" particular cuſtoms and manners, will ever be
" peruſed with delight. The ſcenes of Thomſon
" are frequently as wild and romantic as thoſe of
" Salvator Roſa, varied with precipices and tor-
" rents, and " caſtled cliffs," and deep vallies, with
" piny mountains, and the gloomieſt caverns. In-
" numberable are the little circumſtances in his
" deſcriptions, totally unobſerved by all his prede-
" ceſſors. What poet hath ever taken notice of
" the leaf, that towards the end of autumn,

Inceſſant ruſtles from the mournful grove,
Oft ſtartling ſuch as, ſtudious, walk below,
And ſlowly circles through the waving air?

" Or who, in ſpeaking of a ſummer evening, hath
" ever mentioned,

The quail that clamours for his running mate?

" Or the following natural image at the ſame time
" of the year?

Wide o'er the thiſtly lawn, as ſwells the breeze,
A whitening ſhower of vegetable down
Amuſive floats. —— —— ——

" In

" In what other poet, do we find the ſilence and " expectation that precedes an April ſhower in- " ſiſted on.

The ſtealing ſhower is ſcarce to patter heard,
By ſuch as wander through the foreſt walks,
Beneath th' umbrageous multitude of leaves.

" How full, particular and pictureſque is this aſ- " ſemblage of circumſtances that attend a very " keen froſt in a night of winter!

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A double noiſe; while at his evening watch
The village dog deters the nightly thief;
The heifer lows; the diſtant water-fall
Swells in the breeze; and with the haſty tread
Of traveller, the hollow-ſounding plain
Shakes from afar. —— —— ——

" In no one ſubject are common writers more con- " fuſed and unmeaning, than in their deſcriptions " of rivers, which are generally ſaid only to wind " and to murmur, while their qualities and courſes " are ſeldom accurately marked. Examine the " exactneſs of the enſuing deſcription, and con- " ſider what a perfect idea it communicates to the " mind.

Around th' adjoining brook, that purls along
The vocal grove, now fretting o'er a rock,
Now ſcarcely moving through a reedy pool,
Now ſtarting to a ſudden ſtream, and now
Gently diffus'd into a limpid plain;
A various groupe the herds and flocks compoſe,
Rural confuſion! —— ——— —— ——

" A groupe worthy the pencil of Giacomo da
" Baſſano, and ſo minutely delineated, that he
" might have worked from this ſketch;

—— —— —— On the graſſy bank
Some ruminating lie; while others ſtand
Half in the flood, and often bending ſip
The circling ſurface. —— —— ——

" He adds, that the ox in the middle of them,

—— —— —— —— From his ſides
The troublous inſects laſhes, to his ſides
Returning ſtill. ——— ——— ——

" A natural circumſtance, that to the beſt of my
" remembrance hath eſcaped even the natural
" Theocritus. Nor do I recollect that any poet
" hath been ſtruck with the murmurs of the num-
" berleſs inſects, that ſwarm abroad at the noon of

" ſummer's

" ſummer's day; as attendants of the evening in-
" deed, they have been mentioned;

Reſounds the living ſurface of the ground:
Nor undelightful is the ceaſeleſs hum
To him who muſes through the woods at noon;
Or drowſy ſhepherd, as he lies reclin'd
With half-ſhut eyes. —— —— ——

" But the novelty and nature we admire in the de-
" ſcriptions of Thomſon are by no means his only
" excellencies; he is equally to be praiſed, for im-
" preſſing on our minds the effects, which the ſcene
" delineated would have on the preſent ſpectator
" or hearer. Thus having ſpoken of the roaring
" of the ſavages in a wilderneſs of Africa, he in-
" troduces a captive, who, though juſt eſcaped
" from priſon and ſlavery under the tyrant of Mo-
" rocco, is ſo terrified and aſtoniſhed at the dread-
" ful uproar, that

The wretch half wiſhes for his bonds again.

" Thus alſo having deſcribed a caravan loſt and
" overwhelmed in one of thoſe whirlwinds that ſo
" frequently agitate and lift up the whole ſands of
" the deſart, he finiſhes his picture by adding that,

—— —— —— In Cairo's crouded ſtreets,
Th' impatient merchant, wondering waits in vain,
And Mecca ſaddens at the long delay.

And

" And thus, laſtly, in deſcribing the peſtilence " that deſtroyed the Britiſh troops at the ſiege of " Carthagena, he has uſed a circumſtance inimi- " tably lively, pictureſque, and ſtriking to the " imagination; for he ſays that the Admiral not " only heard the groans of the ſick that echoed " from ſhip to ſhip, but that he alſo penſively " ſtood, and liſtened at midnight to the daſhing " of the waters, occaſioned by throwing the dead " bodies into the ſea;

Heard, nightly, plung'd into the ſullen waves,
The frequent corſe. —— —— ——

" A minute and particular enumeration of circum- " ſtances judiciouſly ſelected, is what chiefly diſ- " criminates poetry from hiſtory, and renders the " former, for that reaſon, a more cloſe and faith- " ful repreſentation of nature than the latter. And " if our poets would accuſtom themſelves to con- " template fully every object, before they at- " tempted to deſcribe it, they would not fail of " giving their readers more new and more com- " plete images than they generally do.

" Theſe obſervations on Thomſon, which " however would not have been ſo large, *if there* " *had been already any conſiderable criticiſm on*

" *his character*, might be ſtill augmented by an " examination and developement of the beauties " in the loves of the birds in Spring,——a view " of the torrid zone in Summer,——the riſe of " fountains and rivers in Autumn,——a man pe- " riſhing in the ſnows in Winter,——the wolves " deſcending from the Alps,——and a view of " winter within the polar circle, which are all of " them highly-finiſhed originals."

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

On the Pathetic of the Seaſons.

Nor be thy generous indignation check'd,
Nor check'd the tender tear to miſery given,
From guilt's contagious power ſhall that protect;
This ſoften and refine the ſoul for heaven.

THE tender paſſions may well be called the ſeaſoning or ſalt of life. They heighten conſiderably whatever we poſſeſs, and impart an edge and delicacy to all our pleaſures. Without them ſociety were every where equally inſipid and dreary. From theſe the fictions of imagination derive their livelieſt colouring, and all the flutterings of the penſive heart their ſweeteſt and loftieſt tones. They are the ſun that enlightens and warms, the gales that fan, the dews that ſoften, and the ſtreams that water and refreſh the intellectual world. To the vivacity they occaſion, and the ſenſations they cheriſh, we owe whatever charms in youth or pleaſes in age, touches the fancy or ſoothes the affections. Nothing in truth affords any ſolid endearment which does not intereſt, abſorb, or deeply agitate the mind. Indifference is the habit or paſſion of the dull, unthinking

ing, or diſſolute. For all who have any heart, meaſure their exiſtence only by their attachments, and ſeem to think every moment of life inſignificant which yields not leſs or more of this favourite enjoyment. Happy they whoſe emotions of freindſhip have but few intervals, whoſe hearts and lives are ſeldom torn and imbittered with a ſuſpenſion of the moſt elegant ſenſations that can be felt: on whoſe hallowed peace and refinement of mind, the clamorous proteſtations of fools, and the hollow impertinent rodomantade of piddling pretenders to generoſity never intrude. But this amiable and intereſting image of human felicity, in which ſo many of the chaſteſt ſenſibilities and ſweeteſt beatitudes are united, is not to be expected in the abſence of ſo much perfection as ſtill adheres to our beſt connections, though its beautiful correſpondence, to all that is valuable in our natures, is no equivocal preſumption, that we may yet hope to obtain it from ſome future period and ſome happier clime.

Senſibility is not a mere conſtitutional, propenſity, but as much a virtue perhaps, as it depends as much on culture as any other of our diſpoſitions does. It takes its vigour, complexion and tendency from temper indeed. But temper is the child of education. What is character but a picture of the heart, or the heart but the offſping

of

of indulgence. To check its firſt and tendereſt emotions, is to blaſt the earlieſt and ſweeteſt indications of humanity. The plant that vegetates with moſt freedom muſt diſcloſe the richeſt beauty. Nature proſpers under no improvement that repreſſes her ardour. The opening mind cannot be too ſoon made acquainted with the ſuffering lot of humanity. Falſe conceptions of the world, not ſeaſonably corrected, blind the underſtanding, blunt the affections, and benumb the heart. Contemplate ſteadily and ſeriouſly the magical ſcenes of life, and be your temper ever ſo flegmatic you cannot remain inſenſible to the ſweet acceſſes of compaſſion. Objects of diſtreſs are formed to operate on the mind mechanically. Yet we ſoften, at the touch of miſery, with a pleaſure not ſo much reſembling what we feel in the diſcharge of animal functions, as that which accompanies the performance of our moſt important obligations. And nothing ſmothers theſe generous emotions ſo effectually as that pitiful ſyſtem of ſelfiſhneſs which ſeems the moſt conſpicuous characteriſtic of modern manners. We are generally dazzled and deluded with the ſplendour of ſociety, before we know any thing of individuals. The ſuffering part of mankind are unavoidably overlooked in that fulſome glitter which conſtantly reſults from an indiſcriminate

aſpect

aſpect of things. Youth abſorbs our affections too much in a thouſand tender and evaneſcent anxieties to permit our ſharing in ſorrows which we have no opportunity of knowing. Whatever we then ſee or hear, awakens the paſſions of emulation and pride; and that mind ſeldom feels which wiſhes only to ſhine. The glaring blaze of luxury is an intoxicating ſight at a diſtance. Alas! it petrifies inſtead of dilating the heart. The luſter is gay and ſparkling, but operates with a ſecret malignity; which, like many other things in the preſent circle of enchantment and faſcination, is fatal in proportion as it charms. We enter on the world with our hopes fixed on a certain object, which inſenſibly becomes dearer to us than life. This naturally engroſſes all our powers of contrivance and acquiſition. And many are the flattering motives which then impel us to realize the figure of a heated imagination. The poor fluttering heart dances with extaſy and joy in the proſpect of ſo much finery and ſhew, and graſps at the tremulous vapour with a frantic enthuſiaſm. But ſurely we are never leſs ſuſceptible of that improvement which terminates in true worth and permanent felicity, then when moſt attached to levity and madneſs. Hence we ſeldom meet with a feeling heart in a very ſanguine conſtitution. The ro-

buſt

buſt and healthy diſcover but little ſenſibility, while ſome minds ſeem of too delicate a texture for any ſyſtem of organs whatever. The moſt exquiſite ſentiments, and the beſt feelings, are often found in conjunction with the weakeſt bodies; juſt as the ſofteſt vibrations of muſic are commonly the moſt affecting. This by the way, is one reaſon why want of health in youth ſo frequently produces fullneſs of virtue in age; and that few, who are then very ſickly, do not alſo turn out very worthy. Early ſufferings mellow their natures, chaſtiſe their paſſions, abate their fondneſs for life, quaſh the petulance of imaginary excellence, inſpire a thouſand delicacies of affection, and ſeaſon the heart with tenderneſs. It is thus that the frowns of adverſity produce habits of humanity, and impregnate the coldeſt tempers with a glow of ſenſibility, to which thoſe of a warmer complexion, under a diſcipline leſs ſevere, are generally ſtrangers. The croſſes of life improve by retrenching our enjoyments, moderate our expectations, give the heart a mortal diſguſt to all the gaudy blandiſhments of ſenſe, and fill our minds with ſenſations and deſires to which nothing of all that lives and rots within the hemſphere is adequate. The fleeting and fugitive objects, around us, are then ſeen and contemplated in their own colours.

The

The world appears no longer, that delicious paradiſe which the giddy and the vicious deſcribe. No: the pale hand of ſorrow robs the gay creation of every fictitious embelliſhment, diſintangles the heart from thoſe luſcious gulphs of luxury, into which it frequently plunges, diſſolves the bewitching charm of pleaſure, and deſtroys the captivating powers of applauſe.

It deſerves to be added, that ſuch a fine fund of ſenſibility is generally prolific of every virtue, that can exalt the nature or enoble the manners of man. How amiable the temper that diſcovers it moſt, and the character of which it is the foundation. He views not his inferiors in the gifts of nature, or diſtinctions, of fortune, with ſupercilious indifference or pragmatical contempt. His generoſity is the genuine effect of habit and principle, not of impulſe and pride; and none of thoſe on whom he confers his obligations, ever feel the debt of gratitude oppreſſive. He does not proſtitute the ſacred profeſſions of eſteem to gratify the ſelfiſh cravings of an inflated heart, but purſues with ſteadineſs and modeſty the beauteous and pleaſing preſcriptions of a mind awake to the beſt and pureſt emotions. When even juſtly offended, the leaſt appearance of a relenting ſpirit ſoftens him into forgivenneſs, and he poſſeſſes the ſingular magnanimity of

wiſhing well to the worſt, as well as the worthieſt, of all mankind. The ſooner he indulges thoſe diſpoſitions, he bids the fairer to eſcape that ſavage ſternneſs of temper and effeminate virulence of ſoul, to which the proud and phlegmatic are ſo rigidly addicted. Indeed, there is the ſame connection between youth without feeling and age without virtue, as between a barren ſpring and a ſcanty harveſt. Humanity ſeldom adorns the concluſion of that life, which begins not with tenderneſs. What is benevolence, but all the ſofter and finer affections, under the management and deſcipline of principle? And ſuch as are ſtrangers to theſe emotions when young, can hardly be thought ſuſceptible of them when old.

One principal purpoſe of true poetry, is to heighten this mental harmony, and by uttering the ideas of the underſtanding, in perfect conſonance with the feelings of the heart, to abate the prevailing aſperity of our natures and improve our habits of ſympathy. The *Muſes* on ſuch a kind embaſſy, not only charm imagination by the magic of their voice, but touch the niceſt ſprings in the human conſtitution with taſte and delicacy. There is a key in every ſort of compoſition to which we are always in tune, but as difficult to hit, as productive of the beſt

effects

effects when it is. How long ſhall we regret, that ſo few have the talent of ſpeaking or writing to the heart. The eaſieſt elegance in conjunction, with the happieſt elocution, is yet frequently deſtitute of this ſingular excellence. We meet with a thouſand authors extremely plauſible, who have a knack at ſaying the moſt agreeable things in the prettieſt manner, but read them only with ſuch placid emotions as objects in ſtill life produce. The diſtinction between the beautiful and pathetic in writing, as in nature, however imperceptible to the vulgar, is peculiarly palpable to perſons of true taſte. A landſcape happily varied with verdant fields, flowery meads, extenſive plains, browzing flocks, winding riviulets, rural cottages, and adjacent woods, is vaſtly pleaſing, but the warbling of birds in all its native wildneſs and delicious vivacity, greatly heightens our ſenſations. And in the gloom of night eſpecially, when we happen to ſaunter abroad and abandon our minds to all the ſuggeſtions of darkneſs, ſolitude and ſilence, while the nightingale attracts our attention with a thouſand plaintive and accordant tones; the heart inſtinctively ſwells with pity and our eyes are filled with tears. We are much entertained with the ſight of a fine ſheet of water, or a ſweetly winding ſtream, but deeply affected by the ra-

pidity of a majeſtic river, or the tumult of the ocean in a ſtorm. Nature in bloom is a beauteous and delightful ſpectacle, but we ſeldom attend to the ſtems of riſing plants, in particular without feeling ſomething uncommonly delicate and tender. In ſhort, we gaze with rapture on ſome faces exquiſitely poliſhed, while others without any thing ſuperior in complexion or features, are yet poſſeſſed of attractions infinitely more exquiſite and irreſiſtible. So that the heart is often melted by ſomething, both in real and fictious pictures, which all the philoſophy in the world can never ſufficiently analyſe.

The genuine pathetic then conſiſts not either in fertility of thinking, or facility of ſpeaking, in luxury of imagination, or volubility of tongue, but in a certain edge of thought and a peculiar form of expreſſion. Such are the true tones of ſenſibility, to which the whole cordage of the heart are *tremblingly alive*, with which all our ſweeteſt ſenſations are in perfect uniſon, and which thrill with extacy through every feeling in the human frame. How much, for example, do we read about the workings of the nobleſt affections in novels, and ſome graver, though not leſs ſilly compoſitions, without feeling one tincture of the ardour recommended. Is not friendſhip often deſcribed with the moſt elaborate minuteneſs, and in language equally flowery and

romantic,

romantic, while the heart ſeems as totally excluded as if it had no natural concern in the ſubject. Many of the fineſt things, to be ſure, are then thrown out, and much artificial elegance diſplayed, yet were it not for the obvious and diſguſting affectation of being thought wonderfully pathetic, one would imagine it could hardly have been thus fully avoided without a great deal of pains. Writers of this claſs, however, are not always without genius, but it is a flaſh that dazzles, not a flame that warms; the blaze of a meteor, not the light of the ſun; the exuberance of a frothy imagination, not the emanations of a ſentimental mind. They miſtake the partialities of a capricious for the delicacies of a ſympathetic temper, declaim with much unmeaning earneſtneſs on the workings of generoſity, at the ſame time that the moſt ſplendid aſſemblage of vocables conceals not their want of humanity, and place a mighty emphaſis on a tenderneſs of affection which they never felt, nor can feel, and with a preſumption as contemptible in literature as in life, are eternally ſubſtituting the little for the great, a fine inſtead of a feeling deſcription, the petty palpitation of a vain for the manly ebullitions of a liberal heart.

THERE is not any thing ſo characteriſtic of Thomſon's genius, as a happy facility in rendering

moſt of his deſcriptions ſentimental and intereſting. Wherever he ſings or ſoars, he ſtill poſſeſſes a ſingular command of the paſſions, and maintains unſhaken the empire of the heart. His adaption of natural objects for awakening the tendereſt emotions, how happy and original.——He indulges every feeling congenial to the mind, wherever he ſuppoſes her; attentive, as he always is, to the various ſcenes and viciſſitudes of nature.—He renders whatever comes in his way peculiarly intereſting, by making it an occaſion of ſuggeſting ſome uſeful hint of morality.——He never fails to ſympathize with the ſufferings of our fellow-creatures, and ſeems to conſider them as ſharers in our own calamities.——And dry as the ſubject might appear to barren minds, under his cultivation, do not the *Seaſons* teem with variety of the moſt emphatic and melting images of human diſtreſs.

I. The aſſociations of ideas, however myſterious, is a very common operation of mind. How many things are conſtantly recollected by the ſuggeſtion of others, between which, in our apprehenſion, there is not either the moſt diſtant alliance or ſimilitude? To theſe extraneous ideas, our underſtandings are open, only in proportion as we feel with keenneſs, and conceive with facility. And here, like objects of inſignificance in common life,

a few

a few only have novelty enough to attract attention. Our Poet makes the beſt uſe of this principle for enriching his work, and impreſſing his reader. He takes great delight in ſelecting ſuch circumſtances as have the ſtrongeſt affinity with many of our deareſt concerns. Theſe, he knew, would always have a fine and laſting effect on the beſt minds. For the memory ſeems a conſtant attendant on imagination. As the one roves through a thouſand regions of her own creating, the other ſeizes the moſt latent and hidden features of reſemblance, in recalling ſcenes long forgotten, and renewing impreſſions almoſt effaced. Every thing he wrote ſhews how ſenſibly his own heart was affected in ſuch ſituations. He had ſenſibilities which humanely echoed to every querulous tone in the whole of nature's ſympathetic ſcale. And his manly ſoul is every where ſo ſuſceptible of all the ſofter feelings, that he generally foregoes the aid of imagination whenever a tender idea comes acroſs him.

What ſpring is in the vegetable, that is youth in the animal and moral world? Trees in bloom, plants ſhooting forth their ſtems, the riſing herbage, the earth mantled in green, and the woods, the fields, and the ſtreams reſuming their wonted harmony, occaſion the ſweeteſt recollections, and put us in mind of a period that muſt continue dear to our lateſt remembrance. I never mix with young

people, but my heart relaxes into joy. I then conſider myſelf as in the midſt of ſome flowery parterre, where every thing around me is ſtill lively, beautiful and flouriſhing. On ſuch occaſions, and not without ſome involuntary ſighs, as well as a few tears, for which another would have bluſhed, I have ſometimes catched myſelf repeating the poet's words.

——————— Then nature all
Wears to the lover's eye a look of love;
And all the tumult of a guilty world
Toſs'd by ungen'rous paſſions,—*ſinks away.*

Thomſon in the whole of his poem had not ſuch another opportunity as this of introducing the ſubject of *love*. And his deſcription diſcovers all the ardour and impetuoſity of one who had early felt its force. But how different his account of this intereſting propenſity of the human heart, from the brutiſh impulſe of the diſſolute, the pitiful, ſneaking *manœuvres* of the mercenary and intereſted, the flippant and clamorous proteſtation of the vain, the vulgar and the vile? His are the delicate exchanges and refinements of mutual purity, fidelity, and eſteem. In this elegant commerce, he well knew, the world has no concern. And he had thoſe only in his eye, who are neither chilled by its

breath, nor debauched by its maxims. He ſuppoſes them full of innocence and tranquillity, but all alive to the generous emotions of a chaſte deſire, and poſſeſſed of every ſenſibility that can take fire at a kindred flame. How ſoft, inſinuating, and forcible the language in which he traces and delineates the principal progreſs and conſequences of a noble, permanent, and reciprocal attachment, but how myſterious and unmeaning to the ſons and daughters of intereſt and ambition? Ye ſlaves of opinion and parade, doomed as ye are, like pictures in an exhibition, to ſcenes of perpetual oſtentation and expoſure, where every fool gratifies his impertinent curioſity at your expence! little do ye know for what a world of inſignificance, you thus relinquiſh the delicious endearments of the heart! But, high as you now ſoar in theſe aerial manſions of imaginary elevation and chimerical enjoyment, you are only regarded by the modeſt and worthy with a look of anxiety and a tear of concern. Amidſt the vaſt profuſion of luxury and vice, which at preſent overwhelm ſociety, what is marriage for the moſt part but an outrageous inſult on reaſon and nature? How often do an union of circumſtances, take place, between thoſe of the moſt heterogeneous and irreconcileable tempers? And the ſtrongeſt artificial ties are then but a ſlender cement, to a match ſo explicitly reprobated by nature. When the ſexes come

come together in this manner, and on no higher principles than mere partners in the common affairs of buſineſs; they may honour it by what appellation they pleaſe, but it is in fact nothing more than a ſtate of legal proſtitution. It is plain, at leaſt, that they ſurrender every thing to each other but their hearts: and, without their hearts, what in the eyes of God or man can ſanctify their choice? Alas! the infatuation of cuſtom is now as epidemical as it is pernicious. We have got, as it ſhould ſeem, into ſome magical circle, which whirls about with ſuch rapidity, as leaves us but little leiſure, to reflect! The deluſion increaſes in proportion as we gaze on the fleeting apparatus that every where burſts on our ſenſes, and all is inchantment around us. Giddy with the conſtant glare and viciſſitude of this dazzling, diſtracting, viſionary ſcene, frantic with the madneſs it inſpires, and moulded by the faſhions it adopts, we ſubſtitute art for nature, convenience for reaſon, and prudence for *love*. Thus our youth are bought and ſold, or flung into one another's arms as it were by random, merely to anſwer the capricious unprincipled purpoſes of parents; who, by the righteous appointment of providence, often live to witneſs the melancholy and ſhocking conſequences of ſuch inhuman arbitrary bargains. Thomſon took not his cue from ſuch a petrifying ſyſtem. It was not the cautious, covetous, creeping conceptions

ceptions of a *few*, but the liberal genius of unperverted nature that inſpired him. And to you who have paſſed the beginning of your days in the calm receſſes of retirement, and imbibed at your leiſure, from an innocent correſpondence with birds and buſhes, that chaſte ſenſibility, which may well be called the rudiments of *love*, his ſong muſt be equally full of tenderneſs and meaning. Indeed, his fluttering heart is the only thing we ſee or feel through the whole deſcription. How judicious and appoſite the hints he ſuggeſts, how generous and ſeaſonable the caution he ſubjoins? With what fraternal tenderneſs and manly delicacy, does he apprize his fair ſiſters of their dangerous ſituation, under the delirium of youth. and the influence of *love?* Nor are his juſt invectives againſt thoſe of his own ſex, who practiſe the diabolical arts of ſeduction, the leſs poignant for their oblique direction.

——————— Ah then, ye fair!
Be greatly cautious of your ſliding hearts:
Dare not th' infectious ſigh; the pleading look,
Downcaſt, and low, in meek ſubmiſſion dreſs'd,
But full of guile. Let not the fervent tongue
Prompt to deceive with adulation ſmooth,
Gain on your purpos'd will. Nor in the *bower*
Where woodbinds flaunt, and roſes ſhed a couch,
While evening draws her crimſon curtains round,
Truſt your ſoft minutes with *betraying man.*

Man

Many and well depicted in the ſubſequent verſes are the mad exceſſes of intemperate *love*. How often does it not unhinge the moſt enlightened and philoſophic minds. What need we mention the commanders of armies and empires; the ſterneſt tyrant that ever wielded the ſceptre of oppreſſion has felt its enervating influence. Hiſtory is replete with characters, otherwiſe the moſt inexceptionable and illuſtrious, who have liberally bled in its cauſe, and ſhamefull expired on its altar. Alas! that its cruelleſt ravages ſhould be ſo generally among the beſt and worthieſt of both ſexes. Many, indeed, are ſo faſhioned by nature, or benumbed by art, as to be affected by nothing; and ſuch as are touched moſt by trifles, are ſeldom ſuſceptible of more forcible emotions. The ſelfiſh, the prudiſh, and the auſtere, are often proof againſt the acceſſes of almoſt any deſire that in the leaſt interferes with the paſſion to which they are moſt addicted. They miſtake apathy for continence, coolneſs for chaſtity, or pride for principle. Extravagancies of this kind are moſtly confined to thoſe of warm conſtitutions, open tempers and ſtrong feelings. And ſurely the moſt ſtriking ſpectacle of delicate diſtreſs is a young perſon frantic or languiſhing under the pangs, anxieties and diſappointments of a hopeleſs paſſion. The Maria of *Sterne*, ah! what a picture of all that is tender and moving in nature? And I could relate

a ſimilar

a ſimilar ſtory from real life, of one of the beſt and ſweeteſt minds that ever animated a human form. Some by feeling without principle, and living without reſtraint, diſcover the moſt flagitious and profligate diſpoſitions. And they whoſe intentions are thus habitually criminal, deſervedly ſuffer unmitigated puniſhment. But there are not wanting others, who, without any uncommon debility of mind or depravity of heart, by a ſudden ſhock of temptation, or the ſeductions of villainy, have, in one moment, been robbed of their character, and loſt their comfort. And well may the ſpecies bluſh for want of humanity, whenever ſuch a caſe tranſpires. It would then ſeem, as if one wretch were materially ſerved by the mortification, and exulted in the ruin of another. The native ghaſtlineſs of vice is never ſo apparent, as in her hollow triumph over fallen or degraded worth. How ſlyly and ſecurely does the ſhocking tale circulate under ground. The poor unfortunate delinquents are ſo univerſally deteſted and avoided, and truth and falſehood ſo artfully blended in their indictment, that whatever they may incline, their vindication is utterly and for ever precluded. Every thing that can mitigate the accuſation is carefully ſuppreſſed, while a thouſand aggravating circumſtances are fabricated, dilated with minuteneſs, and magnified with acrimony. In ſuch a ſtate of reprobation,

what

what ſhall they do? from what quarter ſupplicate mercy? or whether look for redreſs? Where are the bowels to pity, the hands to relieve, or the arms to receive them? The whole aſpect of nature appears to them peculiarly dark, menacing, and gloomy. Horrors ſeize their hearts, and perplexities ſwell their apprehenſions. From friends they meet with reſentment and contempt, inſtead of ſympathy and condolence. To the worthy of every ſex, character, and condition, they have now no acceſs, but are every where ſurrounded with inevitable deſtruction. Thus abandoned of earth and heaven in the midſt of ſociety, they pine in ſolitude, perhaps ſtarve for want, and not unfrequently die in deſpair. Sometimes publick proſtitution is adapted, merely as a temporary expedient from immediate ruin, which, for the moſt part, is much too formidable a proſpect for human nature in the bloom of youth. And how few have the reſolution to be virtuous under an imputation of guilt? What a pity the world is ſo much addicted to believe the worſt? For though detraction, like a ball of ſnow, gathers in ſize and appearance as it rolls along from one to another, it were eaſily melted into nothing by the ſeaſonable gleams of a warm benevolent heart. How fatal and peſtilential, in more ſenſes than one, is the putrid breath of mortals to many

of

of the moſt deſerving, though leaſt fortunate of their fellow-creatures?

II. Many things combine to render the morality of the *Seaſons* affecting. The ſubject itſelf ſeems not the moſt favourable to ſuch a deſign, or at leaſt but little calculated for inſpiring ſuch reflections. And hints of this kind, at a time, or in a place ſo little expected, derive additional beauty and propriety from their locality and novelty. Indeed there is no ſituation in which the human heart has not a very ſenſible ſatisfaction in being thus reminded of its deareſt concerns. But, when deeply engroſſed by indifferent matters, and abandoned to other pleaſures of leſs conſequence, an oblique reference to the various eſſentials of life, is a tacit and pleaſing proof, that the great affairs of the moral world is ſtill an object of providential attention.

It is the duty of every man, who feels himſelf capable of doing ſomething, to ſet out on the plan moſt conſonant to his own genius and proſpect of ſucceſs. Even in this line, the utmoſt exertions will ſtill be found indiſpenſible. But theſe will juſtify him in his own mind, whatever ſhould be the conſequenee. There is a voice within us, which ſanctifies every good intention, and which often whiſpers peace, when nothing is to be heard from

from the world, but the ſarcaſtic ſneer of rudeneſs; from benefactors, but the menacing tone of reprobation; from pretended friends, but officiouſneſs without ſincerity, and proteſtations without meaning.

Yet though ſucceſsleſs, will the toil delight.

is therefore a good motto for every worthy undertaking. The opinion of the world may often miſlead us, but we can never be wrong in doing that which our own hearts tell us is right.

Thomſon's apoſtrophe to heat is extremely natural and well ſupported, but we mention it here chiefly for the beautiful and affecting reflections that concludes it. How finely was his genius calculated for dwelling on whatever relates to the workings of the heart, or has the moſt diſtant reſemblance to the more tender and intereſting ſcenes of life? The leading ideas may perhaps be thought too ſimilar to conſtitute a regular compariſon, but the whole paſſage is emphatical and expreſſive.

All-conquering *Heat*, O interrupt thy wrath!
And on my throbbing temples patent thus
Beam not ſo fierce! Inceſſant ſtill you flow
And ſtill another fervent flood ſucceeds,
Pour'd on the head profuſe. In vain I ſigh,
And reſtleſs turn and look around for night;

Night

Night is far off, and hotter hours approach.
Thrice happy he! who on the ſunleſs ſide
Of a romantic mountain, foreſt crown'd,
Beneath the whole collected ſhade reclines:
Or in the gelid caverns, woodbine wrought,
And freſh bedew'd with ever-ſpouting ſtreams,
Sits coolly calm, while all the world without
Unſatisfied and ſick toſſes in noon.
Emblem inſtructive of *the virtuous man,*
Who keeps his temper'd mind ſerene and pure,
And every paſſion aptly harmonized
Amid a jarring world with vice inflam'd.

He admits a notion, common alike to almoſt all his brother poets and philoſophers, that the circumambient air ſwarms as much with ſpiritual, as the earth with corporeal inhabitants. But what a chaſte and happy vein of ſentimental morality heightens his ideas of the ſubject, at the ſame time that he reprobates the many vulgar ſuperſtitions it occaſions. The ſcene, at leaſt, is finely conceived, and the introduction of his aerial beings could hardly be more in character.

Shook ſudden from the boſom of the ſky,
A thouſand ſhapes or glide athwart the duſk,
Or ſtalk majeſtic on. Deep-rous'd, I feel
A ſacred terror, a ſevere delight,
Creep thro' my mortal frame; and thus, methinks,

A voice, than human more, th' abſtracted ear
Of fancy ſtrikes. " Be not of us afraid,
" Poor kindred Man! thy fellow-creatures, we
" From the ſame Parent-Power our beings drew,
" The ſame our Lord, and laws, and great purſuit.
" Once ſome of us, like thee, thro' ſtormy life,
" Toil'd, tempeſt-beaten, ere we could attain
" This holy calm, this harmony of mind,
" Where purity and peace immingle charms.
" Then fear not us; but with reſponſive ſong,
" Amid theſe dim receſſes, undiſturb'd
" By noiſy folly, and diſcordant vice,
" Of Nature ſing with us, and Nature's God.
" Here frequent, at the viſionary hour,
" When muſing midnight reigns or ſilent noon,
" Angelic harps are in full concert heard,
" And voices chaunting from the wood-crown'd hill,
" The deepening dale, or inmoſt ſylvan glade:
" A privilege beſtow'd by us, alone,
" On Contemplation, or the hallow'd ear
" Of Poet, ſwelling to ſeraphic ſtrain."

What a grateful turn is given to the following deſcription. It is a well-known fact in natural hiſtory, that the plumage of birds is infinitely more ſplendid and beautiful in the torrid than the temperate regions. And the heart of man is but too apt to undervalue bleſſings in poſſeſſion, when put in competition with ſuch as are out of his reach. Our poet, therefore, takes care to remind his rea-

ders, that the fine feathers of theſe foreign birds is all the merit they can boaſt, and that though our eyes are not ſo frequently dazzled with glaring colours, our ears are more exquiſitely charmed with the ſweeteſt ſounds. So that he would have us neither inattentive to our own advantages, nor invidious of ſuch as are enjoyed by others. How endearing and lovely is poetry, when thus employed to moderate our wiſhes and deſires, to reconcile us to the diſpoſitions of Providence, and to quaſh the growling of impat ence with ſentiments of reſignation and acknowledgment.

Wide o'er the winding umbrage of the floods,
Like vivid bloſſoms glowing from afar,
Thick-ſwarm the brighter birds. For Nature's hand,
That with a ſportive vanity has deck'd
The plumy nations, there her gayeſt hues
Profuſely pours. But, if ſhe bids them ſhine,
Array'd in all the beauteous beams of day,
Yet frugal ſtill, ſhe humbles them in ſong.
Nor envy we the gaudy robes they lent
Proud *Montezuma*'s realm, whoſe legions caſt
A boundleſs radiance waving on the ſun,
While Philomel is ours; while in our ſhades,
Thro' the ſoft ſilence of the liſtening night,
The ſober-ſuited ſongſtreſs trills her lay.

To the ſame grateful and worthy purpoſe he improves the ſequel of a thunder-ſtorm. In this, as

in many other inſtances, what an amazing inſight does he diſcover into all the ſecret movements of the heart. Strong emotions of terror are invariably ſucceeded by thoſe of gratitude; for the mind, in moſt caſes, no ſooner recovers from apprehenſions of danger, than ſhe mechanically relaxes into joy.

'Tis beauty all, and grateful ſong around,
Join'd to the low of kine, and numerous bleat
Of flocks thick nibbling thro' the clover'd vale.
And ſhall the hymn be marr'd by *thankleſs man*,
Moſt favour'd; *who with voice articulate*
Should lead the chorus of this lower world?
Shall he ſo ſoon forgetful of the hand
That huſhed the thunder and ſerenes the ſky,
Extinguiſhed feel that ſpark the tempeſt wak'd,
That ſenſe of powers exceeding far his own,
Ere yet his feeble heart has loſt its fears.

Having complimented his country, or pronounced her eulogy with all the ardour of true patriotiſm, his generous invocation on her behalf is a new demonſtration how ſteadily and zealouſly he proſecuted the great deſigns of benevolence. The virtuous reader muſt be highly delighted to find him, on all occaſions, ſo punctual in his acknowledgments to Heaven for every bleſſing that can be of ſervice to ſociety. His ſcale of public virtues, how happy, how natural, how complete!

The

The paſſage riſes into a climax equally beautiful and juſt. And he perſonifies the ſeveral *virtues* for the ſake of variety, and to give his account of them that vivacity, manlineſs, and propriety, without which, it muſt have been languid and ſpiritleſs. But his diſtinguiſhing excellence is, that all his conceptions are perfect and diſtinct. He conſtantly imparts the moſt particular and characteriſtic ideas of the ſubject. And in this the true philoſophy of poetry as well as of hiſtory and painting conſiſts. Our deſire of knowledge, whether original or acquired, continues inſeparable from all our obſervations on men or things. Hence indiſcriminate objects are never agreeable, becauſe they afford no exerciſe to our inquiſitive faculties. And we are ſo made, as to receive delight from nothing, which does not one way or other, contribute to our improvement. Thus pleaſure and utility are in the order of nature conſtantly united, and every attempt to diſjoin them, in theory or practice, in art or life, is a palpable violation of her laws. In the lines to which we refer the diction, as uſual, is bold and nervous, the numbers chaſte and regularly varied, and all the objects reſpectively marked by a ſcrupulous delineation of their ſpecific qualities.

O Thou! by whoſe almighty *Nod* the ſcale
Of empire riſes, or alternate falls,

Send forth the ſaving VIRTUES round the land,
In bright patrol: white *Peace*, and ſocial *Love*;
The tender-looking *Charity*, intent,
On gentle deeds, and ſhedding tears thro' ſmiles;
Undaunted *Truth*, and *Dignity* of mind;
Courage compos'd, and keen; ſound *Temperance*,
Healthful in heart and look; clear *Chaſtity*,
With bluſhes reddening as ſhe moves along,
Diſordered at the deep regard ſhe draws;
Rough *Induſtry*; *Activity* untir'd,
With copious life inform'd, and all awake:
While in the radiant front, ſuperior ſhines
That firſt paternal virtue, *Public Zeal*;
Who throws o'er all an equal wide ſurvey,
And, ever muſing on the common weal,
Still labours glorious with ſome great deſign.

The amiable benignity of a heart happily alive to every impulſe of humanity breaks out anew in the following paſſage. It was his hard fate, in common with every perſon in whoſe caſe poverty and merit are combined, to feel the harſh viciſſitudes of fullneſs and want. And it cannot be too often repeated, that nothing like adverſity improves our ſentiments and principles of compaſſion. A conſtant flow of proſperity unavoidably hardens the heart. Our moral as well as our natural conſtitution is often not the worſe for a temporary ſhock. Such is the innate preſumption of the human heart, that we are ſeldom good for any

any thing till our moſt favourite inclinations are croſſed, or ſome mortifying convictions of our natural frailty and impotence recal us to reaſon. Inordinate indulgence of one kind or other, is conſtantly to be found in the rear of ſucceſs. The moſt fortunate characters in life are but too frequently the moſt unprincipled. Amidſt circumſtances ſo uniformly ſoothing, agreeable, and pampering, we grow giddy and wanton, ſtifle the ſuggeſtions of ſobriety, and forget what we are. Deſires that predominate admit of no moderation; and theſe, whether mercenary or profligate, though as various as the tempers and oppoſite as the intereſts of mankind, are all equally criminal. The man who on a ſerious and impartial retroſpection of his heart, his paſſions, and his conduct does not find many things to rectify, ſome peculiar deviations from duty to regret, various appetites to reduce, and much imperfection to remove, has either never been thoroughly tried, or poſſeſſes an uncommon ſhare of conſtitutional apathy, but he who does, feels his mind as it were mechanically open to the beſt impreſſions, and deteſts vice the more for his own temporary experience of its native malignity and baſeneſs. Thus humility, which reſults only from an habitual conſciouſneſs of imbecility, is yet the foundation of every thing great and good in the hu-

man character. We muſt fall it ſeems before we can riſe, and perhaps never reach the true ſublimity of virtue, till our whole ſouls are filled in this manner with a laſting repugnance to every ſpecies of imperfection. No mind poſſeſſed of true merit ever relaxes into wickedneſs or weakneſs of any kind with a view to ſubſequent reformation or excellence. Virtue has but few votaries that would riſque ſo much in her favour. But he who errs through ignorance, the ſudden impulſe of appetite, or the violence of temptation, and harbours no ſettled criminality of intention, may be the better for it all his life. It is the ſenſe of neceſſity alone that in every thing produces improvement. What capital artiſt will not acknowledge that he owes more to the ſeveral blunders with which his firſt attempts were attended, than to all the various excellencies that marked the different ſtages of his ſubſequent progreſs. Our moral acquiſitions originate from the ſame ſource, and are carried on in a manner perfectly ſimilar. There are few ſituations in which we have not the greateſt reaſon to ſuſpect the ſtrength of our principles. And till we find it neceſſary to realize this idea, we are never ſufficiently on our guard againſt future elopements. Many habits and practices which meet with the approbation and connivance of the world, are notwithſtanding extremely criminal.

nal. But once rouſed to a ſenſe of character, and the vaſt importance of a peaceful mind, though perchance at ſome expence, our good reſolutions recover freſh elaſticity and vigour, and all the better energies of nature are henceforth in readineſs to repel the moſt potent aſſaults of vice. On theſe principles the poet ſuppoſes with great juſtice, that we muſt ſuffer ourſelves before we can well ſhare the ſufferings of others. In contraſting the characters of profligacy and generoſity, it is hard to ſay whether the ſentiment is moſt pathetic or inſtructive; but the language is certainly very beautiful, and the thought very tender.

For ever running an enchanted round,
Paſſes the day deceitful, vain and void;
As fleets the viſion o'er the formleſs brain,
This moment hurrying wild the impaſſion'd ſoul,
The next in nothing loſt. 'Tis ſo to him
The dreamer of this earth an idle blank:
A ſight of horror, to the *cruel wretch*
Who all day long in ſordid pleaſure roll'd,
Himſelf an uſeleſs load, has ſquander'd vile,
Upon his ſcoundrel train, what might have chear'd
A drooping family of modeſt worth;
But to the *generous ſtill improving mind,*
That gives the hopeleſs heart to ſing for joy,
Diffuſing kind beneficence around,
Boaſtleſs as now deſcends the ſilent dew;

To

To him, the long review of order'd life,
Is inward rapture *only to be felt.*

Poets, philoſophers, and divines have all in their turn moralized on ſleep. The firſt and only idea with which it agitates the heaving breaſt of Thomſon, is compaſſion for the poor diſtracted children of folly, thus in one moment deprived of all that engroſſes their deſires, excites their paſſions, and ferments their lives. With what affecting tenderneſs and generous indignation does he appeal to thoſe objects and purſuits which have been ſo frequently fatal to our peace, for an accompliſhment of the promiſes they made, and the end of the hopes they inſpired? But his heart fails him, when he thinks on the many ſtrange contradictions which thus creep into human likeneſs, and degrade the nature and name of man. How deplorable, in this reſpect, our hereditary meanneſs and inſenſibility. We ſeem incorrigible in proportion to the means adopted for our correction and amendment. All the experience of ages joined to that of our fathers, is unable to prevent our indulging the ſame frantic projects of ambition that ruined them.

Where now ye lying vanities of life!
Ye ever tempting, ever cheating train!
Where are you now, and what is your amount?

Vexation,

Vexation, diſappointment, and remorſe;
Sad ſickening thought! *and yet deluded man,*
A ſcene of crude disjointed viſions paſt,
And broken ſlumbers, *riſes ſtill reſolv'd,*
With new fluſh'd hopes to run the giddy round.

III. The various evils that diſtreſs the inferior creation is a ſource of pathetic ſentiments, almoſt peculiar to the ſubject of the *Seaſons.* Our author is not inſenſible to one ſympathetic movement that runs or tremulates through any form of exiſtence whatever. He felt as much as man could feel, the leaſt ſhock that affects the great univerſal principle of animation or ſenſibility, by which the whole ſyſtem of life is inſpired. How much do the ſpirit and vivacity of his pictures owe to the many ſenſible qualities with which he every where endows inanimate things? This innocent artifice the fancy very cordially indulges. Impoſture indeed is ſo ſeldom connected with a benevolent intention, that it muſt be agreeable when it is. Poetical fictions often rid us of real ſorrow; and who would not ſometimes exchange a little painful truth, for a great deal of harmleſs pleaſure? But in delineating the ſufferings of creatures in ſo many important reſpects on a level with ourſelves, imagination is totally out of the queſtion, and the heart alone affected. We then overlook our natural ſuperiority, and commiſerate thoſe for kindred,

kindred, whom at another time, we might trample to death, or devour as lawful prey.

In the verſes we now mean to ſelect, how pathetically does the poet intercede, againſt the cruelty exerciſed by mankind over thoſe very animals to whom they have ſo many obligations? And it is certainly hard to ſay, whether ſuch a butchering propenſity be the greateſt inſult or burleſque on all that is delicate, tender, and lovely in our nature. But whatever has been thrown out by the wiſeſt ſages and beſt poets, from Pythagoras and Homer down to Roſſeau and Thomſon, on this atrocious ſpecies of inhumanity, is but an additional demonſtration, how extremely incorrigible we are, in all our faſhionable and artificial enormities. With what ſophiſtry and addreſs do we ſhift this and every ſimilar imputation, by flattering ourſelves, that theſe are only the romantic ideas of cynics, hermits, and poets, who generally inveigh againſt every thing for the ſake of ſingularity, and whom the world at large has always pitied as delirious. And pray what are moſt of the crimes that chequer the hiſtory of human nature, but the certain conſequence of this obſtinate unteachable diſpoſition. It is not, as is vulgarly imagined, thoſe who know leaſt of mankind, but thoſe who have bought the knowledge of them at the greateſt expence, that accuſe them moſt bitterly.

terly. Airs of a ſuperior acquaintance with life are eaſily aſſumed. And here, as in every other ſcience, thoſe who have leaſt cauſe are commonly the moſt boiſterous in their pretenſions. Nor is there a ſmall ſhare of ſtupidity in bluntly pronouncing them all puppies and ſimpletons, who notwithſtanding our general depravity, ſtill retain ſome veſtiges of unaffected honeſty. It is the pure mind alone, that can ſufficiently repel the debilitating encroachments of art. And their heart and affections muſt be greatly independent of the world, and all its petrifying paradoxes, that can patiently admit convictions ſo long and univerſally exploded. Even moſt of our modern philoſophers and moraliſts are guided more in the formation of their theorems by the ſpirit of the times than the nature of things. Society ſeems no longer under the management and tuition of thoſe who think, but of thoſe who think not. Reaſon in conjunction with all the virtues and graces of humanity, is almoſt, in every civilized ſociety, ſupplanted by a faſtidious fantaſtical chimera, known by the name of taſte, and which in every thing relating to men or manners is a fruitful ſource of extravagance and abſurdity. Our philoſophy comes not down from heaven, but is the child of human vanity, and inherits all the petulance and caprice of her parent. She

exchanges

exchanges that daring ſpirit of magnanimity and independence, by which in antient times, ſhe puſhed her reſearches into the very boſom and hearts both of the little and the great; for a poor puſilanimous compliance with all the preſcriptions of art, all the innovations of faſhion, and all the exceſſes of luxury. It does not, as formerly, ſeem the ultimate object of the learned to make others the better for their knowledge, but to paſs for any thing rather than reformers, to ſtoop to thoſe who will not riſe to them, and to be thought maſter of a thouſand ſuch accompliſhments as Socrates, Epictetus, and Plutarch, would have bluſhed to have known. Pardon the compariſon, ye illuſtrious Heroes of all that deſerves the approbation of poſterity! How many of thoſe who ought to know you beſt, ſeem leaſt inclined to realize your dictates. Inſtead of elevating and refining ſociety with the generous and ſublime truths you left behind you, they poiſon and debaſe it, by the pitiful puerilities of their own barren but pernicious inventions. Their doctrine does not, like yours, mortify, intimidate, or amend the world, but ſoothes the paſſions of the diſſolute, and affords a kind of ſanction to almoſt every criminal indulgence. The Sophiſts who debauched the Grecian youth, never propagated any tenets more incompatible with manlineſs of temper, probity of mind,

and

and purity of life than they do. Reaſon, inſtead of directing them how to proſecute the improvement of others, is the greateſt impediment to their own, and ſhews them only how they may adminiſter their poiſon moſt effectually, or direct the perfidious ſtroke with the ſurer aim. By your gentle, but ſtrong perſuaſive eloquence, the blooming honours that tempt the ambitious and aſpiring to ſcramble and climb, become inviolable principles of acting well; pleaſure loſt its attractions, luxury its charms, wealth its influence, and even tyranny, though intoxicated with flattery and frantic with power, was wont to forego the victims ſelected and deſtined for deſtruction. The very brute creation profited by your inſtructions and humanity, thankfully acknowledged your patronage. Our poet ſeems animated with the ſame genius that inſpired you, but ye had men for your auditors, and he has only their mimics!

And yet the wholeſome herb neglected dies:
Though with the pure exhilarating ſoul
Of nutriment and health, and vital powers,
Beyond the ſearch of art, 'tis copious bleſt.
For, with hot ravine fir'd, enſanguin'd man
Is now become the lion of the plain,
And worſe. The wolf, who from the nightly fold
Fierce drags the bleating prey, ne'er drunk her milk,
Nor wore her warming fleece: nor has the ſteer,

At

At whoſe ſtrong cheſt the deadly tyger hangs,
E'er plow'd for him. They too are temper'd high,
With hunger ſtung and vile neceſſity,
Nor lodges pity in their ſhaggy breaſt.
But *Man*, whom Nature form'd of milder clay,
With every kind emotion in his heart,
And taught alone to weep; while from her lap
She pours ten thouſand delicacies, herbs,
And fruits, as numerous as the drops of rain
Or beams that gave them birth: ſhall he, fair form!
Who wears ſweet ſmiles, and looks erect on Heaven,
E'er ſtoop to mingle with the prowling herd,
And dip his tongue in gore? The beaſt of prey
Blood-ſtain'd, deſerves to bleed: *but you, ye flocks,*
What have ye done; ye peaceful people, what,
To merit death? you, who have given us milk
In luſcious ſtreams, and lent us your own coat
Againſt the winter's cold? And *the plain ox*,
That *harmleſs, honeſt, guileleſs animal*,
In *what has he offended?* he, whoſe toil,
Patient and ever ready clothes the land
With all the pomp of harveſt; ſhall he bleed,
And ſtrugling groan beneath the cruel hands
Even of the clown he feeds; and that, perhaps,
To ſwell the riot of th' autumnal feaſt,
Won by his labour? ——— ———

I have often been very much affected with our bard's deſcription of hunting the *ſtag*. There is ſomething about this elegant and maſterly creature that wonderfully intereſts the reader in his ſafety

ſafety. It hurts every feeling we poſſeſs, that ſo many fine qualities as he is endowed with, ſhould be thus wantonly abuſed by thoſe who ought to value them more highly, and treat them more mercifully. We are greatly pleaſed with his daring and intrepid ſpirit, his ſymmetrical form, his gentle manners, his matchleſs ſtrength, and his unparalleled fleetneſs. But how lamentable the conſideration, that all this avails him nought againſt the hoſtile combination that urge his deſtruction. Hounds, horſes, and men ſtart and perſevere with unrelenting ardour in hunting him down. Somerville, in his *Chace*, deſcribes the various methods of purſuit and flight on this occaſion, in a manner equally beautiful and minute. His account, indeed, is rather too circumſtantial and tedious to make a deep or forcible impreſſion. It contains many ſtrokes of true pathetic; but nothing interrupts the courſe of generous emotions ſo much as an officious attention to inferior objects. In this reſpect Thomſon's deſcriptions are uncommonly pure and expreſſive. There is a truth in his conceptions, and a preciſion in his phraſeology, totally new in this kind of poetry. Here particularly his brevity and perſpicuity are equally admirable. In the whole paſſage he neglects not one capital incident, and we are ſtruck only with ſuch as are.

The STAG too, ſingled from the herd, where long
He rang'd the branching monarch of the ſhades,
Before the tempeſt drives. At firſt, in ſpeed
He, ſprightly, puts his faith; and, rous'd by fear,
Gives all his ſwift aërial ſoul to flight;
Againſt the breeze he darts, that way the more
To leave the leſſening murderous cry behind:
Deception ſhort! tho' fleeter than the winds
Blown o'er the keen-air'd mountain by the north,
He burſts the thickets, glances thro' the glades,
And plunges deep into the wildeſt wood.
If ſlow, yet ſure, adheſive to the track
Hot-ſteaming, up behind him come again
Th' inhuman rout, and from the ſhady depth
Expel him, circling thro' his every ſhift.
He ſweeps the foreſt oft; and ſobbing ſees
The glades, mild opening to the golden day;
Where, in kind conteſt, with his butting friends
He wont to ſtruggle, or his loves enjoy.
Oft in the full-deſcending flood he tries
To loſe the ſcent, and lave his burning ſides:
Oft ſeeks the herd; the watchful herd, alarm'd,
With ſelfiſh care avoid a brother's woe.
What ſhall he do? His once ſo vivid nerves,
So full of buoyant ſpirit, now no more
Inſpire the courſe; but fainting breathleſs toil,
Sick, ſeizes on his heart: he ſtands at bay;
And puts his laſt weak refuge in deſpair.
The big round tears run down his dappled face;
He groans in anguiſh; while the growling pack,
Blood-happy, hang at his fair jutting cheſt,
And mark his beauteous checker'd ſides with gore.

Smoaking

Smoking a Bee-hive is alſo a fact in our commerce with the inferior creation, much too ſhocking to eſcape our authors reprehenſion. His generous abhorence of this ſavage action, is greatly and juſtly aggravated by the innocent manners and examplary economy of theſe prudent political creatures. They waſte not their time as many of us do in idleneſs and miſchief, but are always buſy and always pleaſed. Nor do they ever ſuffer ſo much from any invader, as from thoſe who pretend to take them under human protection. How tenderly and emphatically does the poet expoſtulate with us on ſuch implacable inſtances of our tyranny and oppreſſion: and his ſympathy for the objects of it how becoming and liberal.

Ah ſee where robb'd, and murder'd, in the pit,
Lies the ſtill heaving hives at evening ſnatch'd
Beneath the cloud of guilt-concealing night,
And fix'd o'er ſulphur, while not dreaming ill,
The happy people in their waxen cells,
Sat tending public cares, planning ſchemes
Of temperance, for winter poor, rejoiced
To mark, full flowing round, their copious ſtores.
Sudden the dark oppreſſive ſteam aſcends;
And us'd to milder ſcents, the tender race,
By thouſands, tumble from their honey'd domes,
Convolv'd and agonizing in the duſt.

And was it then for this you roam'd the ſpring,
Intent from flower to flower? for this you toil'd
Ceaſleſs the burning ſummer heats away?
For this in Autumn ſearch'd the blooming waſte,
Nor loſt one ſunny gleam? for this ſad fate?
O man! tyrannic Lord! how long, how long
Shall proſtrate nature groan beneath your rage
A waiting renovation? when obliged,
Muſt you deſtroy.

Robbing birds of their young has been long a favourite diverſion of ſchool-boys, but marks in very ſignificant characters that ignominious ſpirit of hoſtility and depredation, to which we are ſo early and inhumanly addicted. Againſt this cruel ſpecies of amuſement Thomſon remonſtrates with his uſual tenderneſs and indignation. Shenſtone, in one of his beautiful paſtorals, which by the way are ſingularly excellent from ſuch a writer, has a very charming ſtanza on the ſame ſubject.

I have found out a gift for my fair;
I have found where the wood pigeons breed:
But let me that plunder forbear,
She will ſay 'twas a barborous deed,
For he ne'er could be true ſhe averr'd
Who could rob a poor bird of its young,
And I lov'd her the more when I heard
Such tenderneſs fall from her tongue.

The

The characteriſtic of Shenſtone's muſe, is gentleneſs and ſimplicity. On ſome occaſions, though rarely, he likewiſe diſcovers all the feeling of a mind moſt exquiſitely delicate and tender. He never, however, ſays any thing very maſterly or ſpirited. His ſtrains have all the ſoftneſs of the female, but want the dignity and ardour of the maſculine genius. No man ever ſaid eaſier, and perhaps it is impoſſible to ſay ſillier things than he did. Thomſon has no inferior ſhare of ſentiment, but it never unmans him. The tear gliſtens in his eye on every proper or important occaſion, but he ſcorns to proſtitute his feelings on trifles. And nothing could be more happily conceived for illuſtrating the principle idea in the following paſſage, than the nightingale's diſtreſs on finding a vacant neſt. What ſoft and melting tones may not then be expected from her whoſe moſt common notes are ſo ſingularly plaintive, ſoothing and emphatical? She who always ſings from the heart, muſt when rudely plundered of her deareſt cares and concern, diſcloſe her ſorrows with inimitable energy. A ſoft and pleaſing melancholy mixed with a chaſteneſs and vivacity, all her own, is the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of her moſt ordinary muſic; but who can diſcribe the tenderneſs of her ſtrains in ſuch a ſituation? What a

lively picture of her ſorrows and her ſong do the lines in *italick* contain? Such, O ye poets, and ſo ſuperior the genuine effuſions of a warm and feeling heart; to all the florid exuberance of mere imagination? So that nature in uniſon, with the voice of diſtreſs, from whatever quarter, is, after all that has been fabled of the muſes, by much the beſt inſpiration. What a pity that to make verſes, as well as faces, and to be ſuſceptible of the workings of humanity, are ſo very different things.

But let not chief the Nightingale lament,
Her ruin'd care too delicately framed
To brook the harſh confinement of the cage,
Oft, when returning with her loaded bill,
Th' aſtoniſh'd mother finds a vacant neſt,
By the hard hand of unrelenting clowns
Robb'd; *to the ground the vain proviſion falls;*
Her pinions ruffle, and low drooping ſcarce
Can bear the mourner to the poplar ſhade;
Where, all abandon'd to deſpair, ſhe ſings
Her ſorrows thro' the night; and, on the bough,
Sole ſitting, ſtill at every dying fall
Takes up again her lamentable ſtrain
Of winding woe; till wide around the woods
Sigh to her ſong, and with her wail reſound,

With inſtances of this, and a ſimilar nature, the *Seaſons* every where abound. I ſhall but men-

tion

tion one more, and alas! it is much too tender as well as too common a one to be overlooked. We have long conſidered the *Dove*, as an emblem of every thing amiable and harmleſs. And religion itſelf has adopted the figure with the moſt ſolemn propriety, in authenticating the character of its Author. Indeed, the whole manners, as well as the form, and voice, and looks of this beautiful bird, are marked with unparallelled meekneſs and ineffable ſimplicity. It diſcovers no habits but thoſe of the pureſt innocence; its diſpoſitions are full of gentleneſs and delicacy, and the only habits it has are a love of eaſe and an attachment to its kind. But theſe peculiarities, lovely and endearing as they are, afford no aſylum whatever againſt the wantonneſs of human cruelty. And the circumſtance to which the poet alludes, I proteſt once to have ſeen exemplified in ſuch a manner as pierced every feeling in my heart. To what meanneſs do ſuggeſtions of revenge bend the mind of man. The poor unhappy bird, juſt about the very hour in which its mate had been ſhot by its ſide, was known to frequent the identical branch where the deed happened for weeks together, and mourn the fate of its partner; till the murderer, whoſe infamy ought to be perpetuated, ſtung by the reproaches of his neighbours, and

that he might no longer be upbraided with its griefs, was unmanly and baſe enough to kill it alſo.

> The ſtock *Dove* only thro' the foreſt cooes
> Mournfully hoarſe; oft ceaſing from his plaint,
> Short interval of weary woe! again
> The ſad idea of his murder'd mate,
> Struck from his ſide by ſavage fowlers' guile,
> Acroſs his fancy comes; and then reſounds
> A louder ſong of ſorrow thro' the grove.

IV. The *Seaſons* diſcover, in almoſt every line, a latent or oblique reference to human nature and human life. This capital and affecting object is never out of the poet's head, or his heart, whatever elſe ſhould come acroſs him. Trace but his muſe through her wildeſt and moſt excentric motions, and you ſhall always find her touching ſome ſtring that has a near affinity to the heart, or full of ſome ſentiment which long abſence revives in the mind. Nor could any thing whatever produce a finer effect, or do more credit to his taſte and judgment. For a proper management of the memory is one of our moſt inexhauſtible and conſtant ſprings of ſenſibility and tenderneſs. A certain degree of contrition or content is a ſenſation which unavoidably accompanies every reflection on the paſt. From recollection alone, the life of man is either embittered

tered or embalmed. By the ſole weight of this principle, virtue often controuls our paſſions and purſuits, where no other reſtraints are felt. Does not the thief frequently drop his midnight plunder? the murderous knife fall inſenſibly from the hand of the aſſaſſin? and the intemperate votaries of pleaſure ſhrink from the unhallowed embrace, even in the darkeſt receſſes of guilt? From hence, indeed, all the powers of conſcience, and all the ſtings of remorſe, theſe fearful ſcourges of wicked minds, originate. But, O how ſweet and delicious a ſettled conſciouſneſs of integrity, in the tranquil and placid review of a well-ſpent life! The man, whoſe intentions have been thus uniformly pure, may well be misfortunate, but cannot be wretched. His mind, replete with the nobleſt virtues, and tempered by the gentleſt graces, will ſecure him a ſatisfaction independent of the world, blunt the edge of every diſaſter, and huſh his feelings into peace, when all is black and gloomy around him. He wraps himſelf up in the ſweet and cordial ſenſations which innocence and uprightneſs afford him, though poverty and wretchedneſs, the rueful companions of ſolitary virtue, reduce him to the laſt extremity; though ſickneſs emaciate his body, and vexation his mind; though *Slander*, with her thouſand tongues, lard his ſtory with the fouleſt aſperſions. What are the obliquities of the worthleſs to him,

him, while he wants not an aſylum in Providence and his own heart. And the pleaſure which this perſuaſion diffuſes through all the faculties and affections of a good mind, is one of our ſtrongeſt incentives to well-doing. A thouſand things combine to heighten this delightful ſenſation. It is the ſweeteſt incenſe that ſmokes on the altar of ſelf-love, and ſo grateful to all the benevolent prepoſſeſſions of humanity, that moſt virtues, in the preſent myſterious diſpoſition of things, are capable of no other recompence.

A fixed averſion to ſettling in the preſent, as abſtracted from the future, is one of the moſt ſtriking features in the frame and temper of our minds. We ſeldom catch our thoughts, but when they are either dwelling on paſt ſcenes, or figuring and fabricating new ones. Indeed, the idea of what once was, is the more endearing, that the object to which it refers can never be recalled. Early enjoyments make an impreſſion which no time can eraſe. Concomitant or incidental pain dies with the circumſtances that produce it, and nothing ſurvives the intervening viciſſitudes of life, however inſignificant and unaffecting, but the ſad remembrance of pleaſures unappropriated, and opportunities unimproved. A ſenſe of this, however, is unavoidable, while the memory has the power of retention, or the heart of feeling. Nor is it with-

out a mixture of the higheſt tenderneſs and regret, that the amiable and intereſting period of youth is thus reviewed and contemplated, in proportion as it recedes from our poſſeſſion.

The happineſs and perfection of our ſyſtem are inſeparable from the exerciſe of all its moral and active powers. For this reaſon, the different ſtages of life perpetually ſtrike us, as contraſted with each other. At leaſt we ſeldom view them but in a ſtate of compariſon. And ſo ſtrong is our partiality for firſt impreſſions, that in every reſpect we give them the preference. But infancy, though an age of innocence, is not an age of joy. We little conſider the helpleſs and abject circumſtances of our birth, or amidſt how many ſorrows we come into being. For we are no ſooner born, than expoſed to ſufferings which we can but ill ſuſtain, to pains which we cannot remove, to wants which we cannot ſupply, to complaints which we cannot explain. We fondly dream, that youth, becauſe all hope, is all happineſs, and artfully avoid the reflection, that the mind is then eternally ſpringing forward in full expectation of maturity of bliſs with maturity of age. But the more we dip into life, the deeper we ſink into miſery, and enjoyment uniformly diminiſhes as years increaſe.

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is a truth ſuggeſted by conſtant experience, that moſt enjoyments

are

are never leſs reliſhed than in the very inſtant of fruition. We exult while they are yet remote, and give all our ſouls to the pleaſing palpitations of hope, but poſſeſs them with the moſt unaccountable indifference, and pathetically regret their abſence the moment they are gone. Such is the natural caprice of the heart, and ſuch the evaneſcent quality of every mortal delight! We never know the worth of health till in ſickneſs, of plenty till in want, of youth till in age, of happineſs till in miſery. Our awakening to a ſenſe of what we might once have been, is only when the acquiſition is no longer in our power. Nor have we any thing then to compenſate our loſs, but the cutting reflection, that our fate, however bitter, is no more than the natural conſequence of our own folly.

It is only in ſuch a train of thinking as this, or ſomething ſimilar, that we can poſſibly enter into the ſpirit, or reliſh the Pathetic of Thomſon's poetry. His various alluſions to human miſery particularly indicate a diſpoſition of heart, which nothing but the deepeſt reflections on manners and life could thus happily mature. To this ſweet ſympathizing temper of mind he turns and improves, the minuteſt circumſtance. How unexpectedly, for example, does he intereſt his readers in the fate of the very inſect tribes, by exhibiting it as but too natural a picture of their own?

Thick

Thick in yon ſtream of light a thouſand ways,
Upward and downward, thwarting, and convolved,
The quivering nations ſport; till, tempeſt wing'd,
Fierce Winter ſweeps them from the face of day.
Even ſo luxurious men unheeding paſs
An idle Summer's life in Fortune's ſhine,
A ſeaſon's glitter! Thus they flutter on
From toy to toy, from vanity to vice,
Till blown away by death, *Oblivion* comes
Behind, and *ſtrikes them from the book of life.*

To deſcribe the luxury of nature in the torrid regions requires, the utmoſt vigour of his genius. There the vegetable and animal world ſwarm with monſters. The ſtrength, ferocity, and ſtature of thoſe predaceous creatures, who prowl in the deepeſt ſolitudes, who never viſit the haunts of men but to devour them, and the very ſight of whom is enough to chill the heart with horror, are truly incredible. Such is the enormous ſerpent who lurks by the roots of trees, amidſt the buſhes on the banks of pools, and in the thickets that grow along the road, in readineſs to ſpring on every paſſenger that comes in his way,——the tiger, with a beautiful exterior, and a malignant heart, an appetite for indiſcriminate ſlaughter, and a force not inferior to his fury,——the dappled panther, whoſe luſtre dazzles only to deſtroy, who lives in habitual carnage, and ſeems never happy but in the act of killing,——

the

the wolf, whoſe cruelty increaſes with his ſucceſs, and all whoſe appetites are as fierce as his nature is daſtardly and unrelenting,——the ghaſtly hyena, as deſperate and fell in diſpoſition, as its ſhape is ugly and its manners obſcene,——and the lion, with a voice like thunder, raging for his prey, ſhaking his formidable mane, opening his enormous jaws, and ſtalking with terrible majeſty in all the ſtatelineſs of conſcious dominion. Our amiable and tender-hearted poet forgets not to commiſerate the wretched traveller, who, by whatever accident, finds himſelf all alone in this forlorn condition. For the fact, however alarming it may appear to us, is but too common in the hoſtile deſerts of the Eaſt.

Unhappy he! who from the firſt of joys,
Society cut off, is left alone
Amid this world of death. Day after day
Sad on the jutting eminence he ſits,
And views the main that ever toils below;
Still fondly forming in the fartheſt verge,
Where the round ether mixes with the wave,
Ships, dim-diſcovered, dropping from the clouds;
At evening, to the ſetting Sun he turns
A mournful eye, and down his *dying heart*
Sinks helpleſs; while the *wonted roar* is up,
And *hiſs continual* thro' the tedious night.

The

The images and diction of the *Seaſons* are never perhaps ſo rapid, lively and appoſite as when Thomſon deciphers the many diſaſters and misfortunes incident to ſociety. He then aſſumes a tone that ſwells every muſcle of the heart, and leaves not a fibre of the whole ſyſtem untouched. The benevolent intention, as well as the inherent beauties of the ſubſequent paſſage ſhall be my apology for inſerting it. Such is the ſympathy it breathes, the humanity it dictates, and the generoſity it commends, that it were ſingly ſufficient to redeem and endear the *Seaſons*, though there were not another good line in the whole poem.

Ah little think the gay licentious proud,
Whom pleaſure, power, and affluence ſurround;
They, who their thoughtleſs hours in giddy mirth,
And wanton, often cruel, riot waſte;
Ah little think they, while they dance along,
How many feel, this very moment, death
And all the ſad variety of pain.
How many ſink in the devouring flood,
Or more devouring flame. How many bleed,
By ſhameful variance betwixt Man and Man.
How many pine in want, and dungeon glooms;
Shut from the air, and common uſe
Of their own limbs. How many drink the cup
Of baleful grief, or eat the bitter bread
Of miſery. Sore pierc'd by wintry winds,

How

How many ſhrink into the ſordid hut
Of cheerleſs poverty. How many ſhake
With all the fiercer tortures of the mind,
Unbounded paſſion, madneſs, guilt, remorſe;
Whence tumbled headlong from the height of life,
They furniſh matter for the tragic Muſe,
Even in the vale, where wiſdom loves to dwell,
With friendſhip, peace, and contemplation join'd,
How many, rack'd with honeſt paſſions, droop
In deep retir'd diſtreſs. How many ſtand
Around the death-bed of their deareſt friends,
And point the parting anguiſh. Thought fond Man
Of theſe, and all the thouſand nameleſs ills,
That one inceſſant ſtruggle render life,
One ſcene of toil, of ſuffering, and of fate,
Vice in his high career would ſtand appall'd,
And heedleſs rambling Impulſe learn to think;
The conſcious heart of Charity would warm,
And her wide wiſh Benevolence dilate;
The ſocial tear would riſe, the ſocial ſigh;
And into clear perfection, gradual bliſs,
Refining ſtill, the ſocial paſſions work.

Of all thoſe objects that work ſo powerfully on our natures, female diſtreſs is by much the moſt operative. This rouſes all the heart, and touches the ſympathy of man into action. The complaints of a woman, unleſs when defeated by ſome other feeling, procures immediate attention and inſtant relief. Indeed it is not in the maſculine temper to treat

treat them with indifference. We are often more ſolicitous about their welfare than our own, and there is hardly any man ſo barbarous as not to exhibit ſome ſtriking proofs of generoſity, when their ſubject is in queſtion. The peculiar delicacy of their make, their exquiſite ſenſibilities, their dependent condition, the winning aſſiduities of their manners, and the ſettled propenſity we diſcover to ſerve and protect them, give us a laſting and active concern in whatever relates to their pain or pleaſure. Thomſon felt very ſenſibly the force of this circumſtance on his own heart, and applies it with peculiar judgment to work on that of his reader. But the mind that could dictate the following lines muſt have been early and long accuſtomed to the moſt pathetic and affecting emotions.

> Who can unpitying ſee the flowery race,
> Shed by the morn, their new-fluſh'd bloom reſign,
> Before the parching beam. *So fade the fair*
> *When fevers revel through their azure veins.*

His addreſs to the ſhade of a young lady whoſe death he bewails, at the ſame time that he ſoothes her friends and himſelf with the ſweeteſt conſolation, is perhaps as pathetic as words can make it. How ſuperior the energy of truth to that of fiction? What a difference between the language of real and

affected diſtreſs? A feeling heart, under the recent impreſſion of grief is never at a loſs to ſuggeſt the moſt feeling things? How little and contemptible all the efforts of art, to the genuine effuſions of a mind ingulphed in anguiſh. Sorrow warms the whole ſoul, and fills her various faculties with ſomething like inſpiration. It is then that imagination teems with images, that the memory is full of recollection, that ſeverity of taſte is amply repaid by ſtrength of genius, and that the ſwelling heart freely pours forth all its deepeſt and deareſt concerns. The paſſage deſerves to be got by heart by all who have any intereſt in the memory of departed worth.

And art thou, STANLEY, of that ſacred band?
Alas, for us too ſoon! Tho' rais'd above
The reach of human pain, above the flight
Of human joy; yet, with a mingled ray
Of ſadly pleas'd remembrance, muſt thou feel
A mother's love, a mother's tender woe:
Who ſeeks thee ſtill, in many a former ſcene;
Seeks thy fair form, thy lovely beaming eyes,
Thy pleaſing converſe, by gay lively ſenſe
Inſpir'd: where moral wiſdom mildly ſhone,
Without the toil of art; and virtue glow'd,
In all her ſmiles, without forbidding pride.
But, O thou beſt of parents! wipe thy tears;
Or rather to PARENTAL NATURE pay

The

The tears of grateful joy, who for a while
Lent thee this younger ſelf, this opening bloom
Of thy enlighten'd mind and gentle worth.

The comforts ſuggeſted to the friends of this amiable perſon, whoſe early death is thus feelingly lamented, are thoſe of the moſt tender, ſoothing, and ſympathiſing nature. He endeavours to turn their grief into gratitude, and would have them rather thankful for being bleſſed with her ſo long, than diſtreſſed by looſing her ſo ſoon. The moral deſerves a place in every memory. We ſhould not take the length of our lives by the time we live, but from the goodneſs we do, and the happineſs we confer. Many live very long to very little purpoſe. The beſt almoſt every where die firſt. We ſeldom find young perſons of diſtinguiſhed worth, but our hearts take the alarm. We are ſeized with a preſentment of their fate, and inſtantly conclude them too good to live. And may it not be added, for it cannot ſurely be denied, that we moſtly degenerate as we grow old? Age improves us in the knowledge of the world, but not in habits of goodneſs. We exchange the views of a warm for thoſe of a ſelfiſh temper, and abate in gentleneſs and humanity as we increaſe in caution and reſerve. But the groſſeſt extravagances of youth are not half ſo criminal as the dark intrigues of malignity which ſo frequently

debaſe the human mind in the lateſt periods of life. Thus all the finer ſympathies of the heart are ſenſibly diminiſhed by years, and like certain metals, we uniformly ruſt and corrode as we cool. Our beſt affections petrify with our bones, and as the ſtone accelerates in motion with its fall, we literally grow worſe and worſe the longer we live. How ſhould it be otherwiſe? Every thing here is drenched in pollution. Whatever we touch, or taſte, or ſee, is tainted with impurity, and the very atmoſphere ſeems impregnated with elements of deſtruction! We cannot lift an eye, or move a ſtep, where the criminalities of life do not ſtare us broad in the face, and happy they who ſuck them not in, with every breath they draw. Impreſſed by ſuch reflections as theſe, the ſubſequent lines are in perfect uniſon with the deareſt expectations of the human heart:

> Believe the muſe, the wintry blaſt of death
> *Kills* not the *buds* of virtue. No: they ſpread
> Beneath the heavenly beam of brighter ſuns,
> Thro' *endleſs ages*, into *higher powers*.

Life, independent of immortality, to ſuch a nature as ours, were at beſt a pitiful inheritance; but the conviction that we yet ſhall be happy in another ſtate of being, leſſens its hardſhips, and lifts our hopes above it. For all the ſages in the world

world have been ſtrangely duped, and the wiſhes of mankind very wantonly and univerſally abuſed, if our ultimate happineſs make not ſtill a material part in the merciful plan of Providence. There, all our mental and moral deſires point as naturally, as our different appetites to their reſpective objects of gratification. And why, or for what ſhould we relinquiſh ſo delightful a proſpect? Forgive our preſumption and ignorance, ye mighty Adepts in reaſon and refinement! We yield you the honour of ſuperior wiſdom, on the ſimple condition that you do not inveigle us in the ſame perplexities with yourſelves, or darken our hemiſphere with the diſmal clouds that habitually ſettle in yours. Find as much fault with the moral government of the world as you will, but impoſe not your noſtrums on us at the dreadful expence of our peace. You are welcome to all the mighty ſatisfaction your philoſophy ſuggeſts. For our part, we would rather be vulgar and happy than wretched and wiſe. And while you congratulate yourſelves, that like the fowls of heaven, or the beaſts of the field, you have only your ſeaſon, and give way in your turn to a new ſucceſſion of the ſame temporary and evaneſcent beings, we will humbly hope with the poet, that in ſpite of all the imputations of credulity and ſurmiſes of ſcepticiſm, there is a period and place, fixed in the deſtinations of Nature, where

in due time we ſhall yet be as perfect as virtue and as bleſſed as goodneſs can make us. Let us indulge the pleaſing expectation, that then and there, vices inflame not the paſſions; that real and imaginary miſeries are no more; that all mutual animoſities are for ever extinguiſhed; that the ſweet reciprocations of friendſhip are not henceforth checked or ſuſpended by the chilling apprehenſion of either breach or ſeparation, and that ſociety, as here, is no longer blaſted with a penury of hearts. Surely a more raviſhing idea, whether true or falſe, can not lay hold on the mind than one thus flattering and congenial to all our ſtrongeſt and beſt deſires. From this perſuaſion the human affections derive an elevation and ſublimity vaſtly ſuperior to all the little pitiful ſtruggles of wealth and ambition! And bleſſed be the genius of Thomſon, for mingling in this manner with the pureſt ſtrains of poetry ſome of the ſweeteſt and moſt infallible conſolations of humanity.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

On the Sublimity of the Seaſons.

For from the birth
Of mortal man, the ſovereign maker ſaid,
That not in humble nor in brief delight,
That not the fating echoes of renown,
Pow'r's, purple robes, nor pleaſures flowry lap,
The ſoul ſhould find enjoyment: but from theſe
Turning diſdainful to an equal good,
Thro' all th' aſcent of things, enlarge her views,
Till every bound at length ſhould diſappear,
And infinite perfection cloſe the ſcene!

MANY paſſages in the *Seaſons*, belong to a much higher claſs than any we have yet diſcriminated. Theſe are purpoſely reſerved till now, as being moſt likely to deepen the general impreſſion, or rivet ſuch ſentiments as reſult from the whole. And ſurely whatever tends in this manner, to retrench the levities of fancy, inſtigate reflection or engroſs the heart, can hardly be altogether uſeleſs. In this perſuaſion, having ſaid ſo much about our Author's attention to the *beauty*, we ſhall now conſider in a few words how he manages the *magnificence* of nature. And if not dupes to a faſtidious taſte or

an inſenſible heart, we ſhall find this beautiful and affecting poem as elevated and ſublime as it is agreeable and charming.

Ideas of littleneſs and greatneſs ſeem peculiarly congenial to the human underſtanding. Our conceptions very ſenſibly contract and enlarge alternately with minuteneſs and amplitude of every kind. And of all our rational pleaſures, that which accompanies the expanſion of our mental and moral powers is by much the moſt exalted. The deſtination of our ſyſtem is as noble as its origin is mean. In us the inſpiration of mind, is not a flaſh that periſhes but a flame that laſts for ever and brightens as it burns. We are not only made ſuſceptible, but originally endowed with the powers as well as impregnated with the deſires of immortality. Gravitation is a quality not more eſſential to bodies, than aſpiration to the mind of man. And what is the hiſtory, both of the individual and ſociety but that of a gradual aſcent, from the loweſt to the higheſt meaſure of human perfection and excellence?

Our averſion to dimunition, both in a literal and figurative ſenſe, is but the natural conſequence of this principle. At leaſt we never receive much entertainment from any thing extremely little. The American *humming-bird*, for example, is a ſpectacle of great curioſity, but

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if we analyſe the feelings, it ſuggeſts we ſhall very ſoon be ſatisfied, that it is the novelty contraſt and neatneſs, not the ſize, to which we owe our delight.

In truth the human mind is tranſported, only with what carries her out of herſelf. She feels uneaſy in a ſtate of confinement. It is her nature to ſoar, and of conſequence to ſuffer from whatever interrupts her flight. Hence emotions of ſublimity ſuit with aſtoniſhing propriety the vaſtneſs of her views, the energy of all her active faculties, and that glorious ambition which ſtimulates her ardour and prompts her exertions.

Notwithſtanding the modern acquiſitions of philoſophy, the whole apparatus of mind is ſtill extremely myſterious. The mechaniſm of thought, however, proceeds on laws and principles we apprehend not leſs invariable than thoſe of matter. Our powers of conception uniformly imbibe the reſpective qualities of their objects, juſt as our bodies are affected by thoſe of food and climate. We behold with conſcious dignity whatever is great and elevated. It is impoſſible to take a ſteady view of the ſorrounding heavens, without feeling a growing capaciouſneſs of ſoul and a placid ſwell of the heart. But impreſſions of ſimple grandeur are received only from objects of pure magnitude. The ocean, extenſive deſarts, and a range of enormous mountains,

tains, are all ſources of great ideas. Height and depth, and breadth and length of any uncommon demenſions, are likewiſe viewed with ſimilar ſenſations. But the human ſoul brooks no ſort of reſtraint, or at leaſt poſſeſſes not capacity ſufficient, to comprehend the ſcene ſhe evidently pants to occupy. It is in the contemplations, eſpecially of infinite ſpace, omnipotent power, immenſe exiſtence and eternal duration, where mind ſeems moſt at home and imagination moſt in character. Thoſe objects indeed are peculiarly fitted to act on all the capital movements in our ſyſtem. And every other energy is neceſſarily abſorbed in theirs.

Bleſſed be our kind benignant Creator, for thus eſtabliſhing a connection ſo full of utility and delight between the viſible ſignatures of his inviſible power, and the inſtinctive movements of the human heart. They meet no where but in our ideas, and their union is no inconſiderable addition to our happineſs! Why is the ear ſo finely attuned to all the delicious modulations of natural and artificial ſounds? Why are the eyes ſo faſhioned as to catch every beauteous feature and every ſplendid character that mark the minuteſt and ſublimeſt works of nature? And why is the perception of ſuch objects as theſe accompanied with ſenſations ſo ſalutary, ſo grateful, ſo elevating? We are not only ſupplied with every

needful convenience but liberally indulged with a luxury, as profuſe as our hearts can wiſh, and as refined as our natures can require. The heavens, the earth, the air, the ocean, at once ſatisfy our wants and inſpire us with rapture. Even thoſe very workings of timidity ſo troubleſome, while predominant, are yet found in many caſes, indirectly, at leaſt, to occaſion peculiar delight. Thunder, earthquakes, lightnings, and hurricanes, alarming and tremendous as they are, indicate ſomething not unpleaſing however awful! Outrageous as they ſeem to us, they are under a check which they cannot reſiſt, and ſubject to a will that orders every thing for the beſt. By the ſame hand that launches the thunderbolt, our fleeting lives are ſuſtained, and he who impregnates the clouds with ſulphur and darts the impetuous fire-ball, perfumes the air we breath and tempers the light we ſee. Nor is he leſs conſpicuous to the philoſophic eye, in the murmuring brook than in the raging ſea, in a gentle gale, than in a violant ſtorm, in the glimmerings of a glow-worm, than in the blaze of the ſun, in the ſhades of a roſe than in the colours of the rainbow, in the ſhell of a ſnail than in the vaulted heavens, and in the web of a ſpider than in the general ſyſtem of the univerſe!

Such are ſome of the various and affecting phenomena from which the *Muſe* of Thomſon culled

culled her choiceſt flowers. To him nature, was happily familiar in all her faireſt and ſublimeſt forms. He ſaw nothing but beauty, heard nothing but muſic, and felt nothing from the objects around him but palpitations of joy and ſentiments of gratitude! Nor is it eaſy to ſay whether he ſucceeds moſt as a ſublime Writer, in delineating the wonders of external nature or diſcloſing the magnanimous ſentiments of a worthy mind. We can only now afford the reader a ſhort illuſtration of theſe two particulars.

The firſt of theſe involves in part at leaſt, almoſt every deſcription in the *Seaſons*. But we mean to ſelect for the readers ſatisfaction and entertainment, only a few of the moſt ſtriking inſtances, merely to give him an idea of that ſublime majeſtic manner in which the muſe of Thomſon kept pace with his ſubject.

An idea of groteſque wildneſs involving much latitude, impreſſes the mind with ſenſations of aſtoniſhment and awe. In his deſcriptions of the tropical countries, how many objects formed on this capacious ſcale are flung together in the ſubliméſt groups imaginable

Majeſtic woods, of every vigorous green,
Stage above ſtage, high waving o'er the hills;
Or to the far horizon wide diffus'd,
A boundleſs deep immenſity of ſhade.

He

He adds in the ſame characteriſtic tone of unaffected grandeur; where by the way, the additional circumſtance of ſhade, wonderfully deepens the ſolmnity of the ſcene

Here lofty trees, to ancient ſong unknown,
The noble ſons of potent heat and floods
Prone-ruſhing from the clouds, rear high to Heaven
Their thorny ſtems, and broad around them throw
Meridian gloom.——

What a moving and awful picture does he give us of the *peſtilence*, that dreadful viſitation of the Almighty, as it rages in full horror among the noxious climates of the eaſt? In the lines that conclude the paſſage, we have an image of *deſpair*, ſingularly beautiful, pictureſque and new.

Thus o'er the proſtrate city *black Deſpair*
Extends her raven-wing; while, to complete
The ſcence of deſolation, ſtretch'd around,
The grim guards ſtand, denying all retreat,
And give the flying wretch a better death.

Nothing can poſſibly be more affecting, even in idea, than the ocean in one of thoſe tremendous *blaſts* which happen ſo frequently between the tropics. Here inevitable deſtruction impending from the heavens above, and yawning from the depths beneath, increaſing darkneſs, conflicting elements, and mutual conſternation and terror,

terror, combine to fill imagination with fear, and overwhelm the heart with ſorrow.

——A faint deceitful calm,
A fluttering gale, the dæmon ſends before,
To tempt the ſpreading ſail. Then down at once,
Precipitant, deſcends a mingled maſs
Of roaring winds, and flame, and ruſhing floods.
In wild amazement fix'd the ſailor ſtands.
Art is too ſlow: By rapid fate oppreſs'd,
His broad-wing'd veſſel *drinks* the whelming tide,
Hid in the boſom of the black abyſs.

Some of the circumſtances that announce the awful approach of *thunder*, are narrated in terms that exhibit the object in all its natural importance and ſublimity. Such as

A boding ſilence reigns,
Dread thro' the dun expanſe; ſave the *dull ſound*
That from the mountain, previous to the ſtorm,
Rolls o'er the muttering earth, diſturbs the flood,
And ſhakes the foreſt leaf without a breath.

And where the birds and herds are alarmed with the ſigns of the coming tempeſt, ſurely the canvas never exhibited any thing more real and affecting

Prone, to the loweſt vale, the aërial tribes
Deſcend: the *tempeſt-loving raven ſcarce*
Dares wing the *dubious duſk*. In *rueful gaze*

The

The *cattle* ſtand, and on the ſcowling heavens
Caſt a deploring eye.

His deſcription of thunder and lightening, is not only juſt and pictureſque, but enriched with ſtrokes of the deepeſt ſublimity. The progreſs of that wonderful phenomenon is finely traced, and the natural grandeur that accompanies all its ſtages ſupported throughout.

At firſt, *heard ſolemn o'er, the verge of heaven,*
The *tempeſt* growls; but as it nearer comes,
And *rolls* its *awful burden on the wind,*
The lightnings flaſh a larger curve, and more
The noiſe aſtounds: till over head a ſheet
Of livid flame *diſcloſes wide*; then ſhuts,
And opens *wider*; ſhuts and opens ſtill
Expanſive wrapping *ether in a blaze.*
Follows the looſen'd aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deepening, mingling; *peal* on *peal*
Cruſh'd horrible, *convulſing* heaven and earth!

In the following ſcene, relenting nature may well be figured, weeping over the direful cataſtrophe, occaſioned by the furious elements among the moſt harmleſs of her offspring and thoſe of her walks, that are leaſt accuſtomed to violence and outrage. He introduces it with one of the faireſt ſpectacles of nature, perhaps that the eye of man can behold!

Wide-

Wide-rent, the clouds
Pour a whole flood; and yet, its flame unquench'd,
Th' unconquerable light'ning *ſtruggles* through,
Ragged and *fierce*, or in *red whirling balls*,
And *fires* the *mountains* with redoubled *rage*.
Black from the *ſtroke*, above, the ſmould'ring pine
Stands *a ſad ſhatter'd trunk*; and, ſtretch'd below,
A lifeleſs group the *blaſted cattle* lie:
Here the ſoft flocks, with that ſame *harmleſs look*
They *wore* alive, and *ruminating ſtill*
In *fancy's eye*; and there the frowning bull,
And *ox half-rais'd*.

He has even made the approach of the autumnal fogs a ſubject of ſublime deſcription, by interweaving in his account of it the receding of a moſt majeſtic object from human view. A mountain is always great, but eminently ſublime when thus ſurrounded with clouds

No more the mountain, *horrid*, *vaſt*, *ſublime*,
Who pours a ſweep of rivers from his ſides,
And high between contending kingdoms rears
The rocky long diviſion, *fills the view*
With great variety; but in *a night*
Of gathering vapour, from the baffled ſenſe
Sinks *dark* and *dreary*.

His deſcription of the moon, may perhaps be thought a little too ſeverely wrought. For grandeur ſuffers eſſentially from the leaſt want of

of ſimplicity. The truth is, Thomſon generally explains at the ſame time that he deſcribes. This unavoidably wears an air of obſcurity, to ſuch readers at leaſt, as are not previouſly acquainted with the ſubject. Fortunately, the exceptionable lines may here be omitted, without injuring the reſt, which apart from theſe, cannot but leave ſome pleaſing impreſſions of ſublimity on every ſuſceptible heart.

——— Mean-while the *moon*
Full orb'd and *breaking* thro' the *ſcatter'd cloulds*,
Shews her *broad viſage* in the *crimſon'd eaſt*.
Now thro' the *paſſing cloud* ſhe ſeems to *ſtoop*,
Now up the pure cerulean *rides ſublime!*
Wide the pale deluge floods, and ſtreaming mild
O'er the ſky'd mountain to the ſhadowy vale,
While rocks and flood reflect the *quivering* gleam,
The whole air whitens with a boundleſs tide
Of ſilver radiance, *trembling* round the world.

It is the diſtinguiſhing province of all true poetry, to people the regions of imagination with ſuch beings as are beſt adapted to the ſituation. This may be called the truth of fiction, and is juſt as eſſential to deſcription as the ſtricteſt characteriſtical propriety, to dramatic compoſition. Every thing the muſe addreſſes, has a genius ſuited to its nature, with whom, ſhe eſtabliſhes an immediate correſpondence. Thus, the capital harbin-

gers of a winter tempeſt, are pointed out in all their ſpecific colouring and qualities. The whole paſſage is replete with ſhades of the deepeſt ſolemnity and grandeur; but the lines ſubjoined deſerve peculiar attention, for the ſake of a circumſtance uncommonly puctureſque and original.

> Along the woods, along the mooriſh fens,
> *Sighs* the ſad *Genius* of the *coming ſtorm*;
> And *up* among the *looſe diſjointed* cliffs,
> And *fractur'd* mountains *wild*, the brawling *brook*
> And *cave*, preſageful, ſend a *hollow moan*,
> Reſounding long in liſtening Fancy's ear.

The terror inſpired by the ſcence, thus preſaged even in a ſituation of the greateſt ſecurity, and ſome of its moſt alarming accompaniments, are finely marked in the ſubſequent verſes. It is moreover an inſtance of familiar ideas, being wrought up into ſentiments, not leſs ſublime than pictureſque.

> *Sleep* frighted flies; and round the *rocking* dome
> For entrance *eager*, *howls* the *ſavage* blaſt.
> Then too, they ſay, thro' all the *burden'd air*,
> *Long groans* are heard, *ſhrill ſounds*, and *diſtant ſighs*,
> That, utter'd by the *dæmon* of the *night*
> Warn the devoted *wretch* of *woe* and *death*.

From the ſame paſſage, I add one of the grandeſt images perhaps that ever ſwelled the human

human mind. Nor do I juſt now recollect an inſtance from any Author, ancient or modern, in which ſimplicity and ſublimity are more happily and completely united.

Meantime the *mountain-billows*, to the clouds
In dreadful *tumult* ſwell'd, ſurge above ſurge,
Burſt into chaos with tremendous *roar*,
And *anchor'd navies* from their ſtations *drive*,
Wild as the winds acroſs the howling waſte
Of mighty waters:

Here follows a very ſtriking example of greatneſs, or force without ſublimity. It is needleſs to ſay why. Let us but examine the ſenſations which theſe words produce in our minds the moment we read them. The principles to which criticiſm refers, in this caſe, are as obvious and inconteſtible as axioms of geometry. We are all moved in a ſimilar manner by ſimilar objects. Perhaps the ſudden and unexpected exertion of extraordinary force, ſtartles or ſhakes, but may not leave imagination leiſure enough, to feel any ſublimer emotions. Such at leaſt are ſeldom coincident to the firſt impreſſion.

If ſome ſharp rock,
Or ſhoal inſidious break not their career,
And in looſe fragments fling them floating round.

A circumſtance not improbable from the natu-

ral hiſtory of the moſt noble and magnanimous of animals, intitles theſe three lines to a place, among the many examples of ſublimity to be found in the *Seaſons*. The contraſt between the ſavage indeſcriminating cruelty of the *Wolf*, and the well known generoſity of the *Lion*, in this inſtance, is not only ſtrictly characteriſtical but equally intereſting and ſublime!

Even beauty, force divine! at whoſe bright glance
The generous Lion *ſtands* in *ſoften'd gaze*
Here bleeds a hapleſs undiſtinguiſh'd prey!

We ſhall but trouble the reader with one quotation more, in which the object loſes nothing of its natural ſublimity from the deſcription. It is where a thaw takes place, in ſome large capacious river, while veſſels, barks and barges, are unhappily expoſſed to all the accumulated dangers and horrors of floating piles of ice, tumbling down with vaſt rapidity and threatening immediate deſtruction to whatever comes in their way.

And hark! the lengthening *roar continuous* runs
Athwart the *rifted* deep: at once it *burſts*,
And *piles* a thouſand *mountains* to the clouds.
Ill fares the bark with trembling wretches charg'd,
That, toſs'd amid the *floating fragments* moors
Beneath the ſhelter of an icy iſle,
While night o'erwhelms the ſea, and *horror* looks
More *horrible*. Can human force endure

Th'

Th' aſſembled miſchiefs that beſiege them round?
Heart-gnawing hunger, fainting wearineſs,
The *roar* of *winds* and *waves*, the *cruſh* of ice,
Now-*ceaſing*, now *renew'd* with louder *rage*,
And in dire echoes *bellowing* round the *main*.
More to embroil the deep, Leviathan
And his *unwieldy* train, in dreadful ſport,
Tempeſt the looſen'd brine, while *thro' the gloom*,
Far, from the *bleak inhoſpitable ſhore*,
Loading the winds, is heard the *hungry howl*
Of *famiſh'd monſters!*

But it is not among the inanimate parts of nature only or chiefly, that our bard diſplays the ſublimity of his genius. Many zoological deſcriptions in the *Seaſons* are equally ſimple and exalted. The graceful impetuoſity of the *Steed*, and rampant fury of the *Bull*, are both delineated with dignity and truth. His ſtrictures on the *Lion*, the *Elephant*, the *Hippopotamos* and the *Eagle*, are ſtill however touched with a bolder pencil. He ſeizes indeed, with inimitable dexterity and eaſe every thing great and majeſtic in nature! And his poem contains more ſublime images perhaps, in proportion to its ſize, than any other purely deſcriptive one we have.

IT is now high time, however, to examine a little that ſentimental ſublimity of which alſo he is no inferior maſter. Here too the chief difficulty

difficulty lies in condenſing the ideas which every new view of the ſubject ſuggeſt, and abridging the materials that every where arrange themſelves before us.

To this purpoſe, how conciſe and emphatical his account of thoſe illuſtrious characters, whoſe uſeful ſcience and active virtue adorned the earlier periods of ſociety. Indeed there is no reading this ſublime roll of heroes without emotions of emulation. Such are the powerful attractions of ſuperior worth, and ſo much more congenial to the inmoſt affections of the heart is good than bad example! The calm majeſtic invincible fortitude of *Socrates* embracing the ſterneſt fate in the mildeſt compoſure——the diſpaſſionate and diſintereſted patrotiſm and intrepidity of *Leonidas* in ſacrificing himſelf for the good of his country,——the modeſt and humble, but pure and perſevering honeſty of *Ariſtides*, in uniformly prefering juſtice to his own intereſt,——the ſimplicity and gentleneſs of the amiable and zealous *Cimon*, in patronizing every appearance of merit,——and the ſteady reſolution of *Timoleon*, ſo tempered with humanity on every trying occaſion, with all thoſe ancient enthuſiaſts for the rights of mankind, and the dignity of real virtue, whoſe memorial is ſtill dear to poſterity, are admirably calculated to ſtimulate our innate love of excellence, to awaken all the ingenuity of our natures,

tures, and brace our hearts with new nerves.

In another paſſage, which as it is not ſo long, we ſhall quote: what a glorious image has he produced of *contentment*, in conjunction with all the kindred virtues of a mild and generous temper. He has certainly very few equals, in thus delineating the various energies and effects of a good heart. According to his philoſophy, which is that of nature and experience, how vaſtly ſuperior the private abodes of humble fortitude to all the troublous ſcenes of tumultuous pride and tormenting impatience? Think on this, ye buſtling factious petulant and aſpiring ſpirits, to whom, all the forms of decency and moderation are equally contemptible, who miſtake the punctillios of a frivolous for the dictates of an elegant mind, affectation for dignity, and temerity for ardour; and who conſume your fortune and conſtitutions in graſping at phantoms, that never can be realized. What an eloquent and emphatical picture does the poet here ſet before you, of the infinite mortifications, diſaſters, and agonies that ſo frequently chequer ſuch lives as yours. Who would not pity, from the bottom of their hearts, thoſe poor giddy frantic wretches, who can read ſuch a paſſage as this, with a wanton or a liſtleſs indifference, without imbibing the moſt ſettled convictions of the reality and importance of virtue to human welfare, without inſtantly, and for

ever renouncing every vicious prepoſſeſſion, and every worthleſs habit, and without reſolutely adhering to the poſitive injunctions of truth and nature, in ſpite of all the criminal influence and addreſs of art. Conſider the man of hidden worth and unaffected delicacy. His plan is preſent as well as future enjoyment. He ſubmits to ſome deſcipline that he may avoid much inconvenience and pain. In giving way to many incumbent evils, he only prepares himſelf for overcoming them. That independent liberality of mind, and true propriety of acting, at once ſo popular and ſo rare, are finely exemplified in every part of his conduct. He has as much wiſdom as ſweetens, not ſo much as darkens his converſation, and his manners undebaſed by art, diſcover all the undiſguiſed ſimplicity of nature. His face is not diſtorted with grimace, his head totters not with the giddineſs of the ſcene he occupies, his heart flutters not with the allurements of vice that environ him. How temperate his appetites, how orderly his paſſions, how meek his diſpoſitions, how placid his life! The beautiful ſerenity of his mind, communicates a certain air of compoſure to every thing around him. His houſe is the manſion of purity, the temple of virtue, and the aſylum of the deſtitute. There, dwell ſocial concord, domeſtic comfort, holy friendſhip, unbroken health, blooming beauty, youthful innocence, and

age

nge matured by experience, and rather ſoftened than ſoured, with infirmity and years. The contraſt is carried on with equal taſte and ſpirit throughout the quotation, and at leaſt as full of ſtings to one party as of cordials to another.

Let ſuch as deem it *glory* to *deſtroy*,
Ruſh into *blood*, the *ſack* of *cities* ſeek;
Unpierc'd, exulting in the *widow's wail*,
The *virgin's ſhriek*, and *infant's trembling cry*.
Let ſome, far-diſtant from their native ſoil,
Urg'd or by want, or harden'd avarice,
Find other lands beneath another ſun.
Let *this* through cities work his eager way,
By *legal outrage* and *eſtabliſh'd guile*,
The ſocial ſenſe extinct; and *that* ferment
Mad into tumult the *ſeditious herd*,
Or *melt* them down to *ſlavery*. Let theſe
Inſnare the wretched in the *toils* of law,
Fomenting diſcord, and *perplexing* right,
An iron-race! and thoſe of *fairer front*,
But *equal inhumanity*, in courts,
Deluſive pomp, and *dark cabals*, delight;
Wreathe the *deep bow*, diffuſe the *lying ſmile*,
And tread the weary labyrinth of ſtate.
While *he*, from all the ſtormy paſſions *free*
That reſtleſs men involve, *hears*, and but *hears*,
At diſtance *ſafe*, the *human tempeſt* roar,
Wrapt cloſe in *conſcious peace*.

But foregoing a number of paſſages that exemplify the ſame idea, and are equally intitled to diſtinction,

ſtinction, a beautiful vein of elevated piety, which runs through the whole poem, more eſpecially merits our attention.

All the wiſeſt and worthieſt of the ſpecies, have indulged devout affections, and recommended them to others. It is the narrow, the ſelfiſh, or licentious minded, who reprobate feelings of which, whether from conſtitution or habit, they ſeem ſo ſtrangely incapable. For ſentiments of this kind are deeply rooted in the beſt hearts, conſonant to all the inſtincts of unperverted nature, and highly becoming our preſent dark dependent and probationary circumſtances. In truth, every indication of paternal wiſdom, and benignity in the government of the world, correſponds with admirable propriety to all our firſt, our pureſt, and ſublimeſt deſires. In this manner we joyfully recogniſe a benefactor, whoſe favour nothing but impenitence can forfeit; a friend, who kindly ſhares our deareſt ſolicitudes, a father, in whoſe boſom the wounded heart reſts, and repoſes all its troubles.

Whatever is great and amiable in the creatures and objects around us, naturally awakens our admiration and attracts our eſteem. Magnificence expands the mind, and Beauty captivates the heart. But theſe qualities, however diverſified, are the native expreſſions of power and goodneſs. Mind can only be affected by mind. Nor can any form or modification of matter produce either mental

mental or moral emotion, but as it points to an inviſible Agency. So that raiſing our hearts to heaven is not transferring them from nature, but from the imperfect image to the all-perfect Original. For all that charms our ſenſes, enlarges our conceptions or exalts our expectations among the complicated wonders of the univerſe, are but the temporary ſhadows of his excellence, whoſe being is uncreated, whoſe perfections are infinite, and whoſe nature is eternal.

A correſpondence with the AUTHOR, ſeems therefore indiſpenſible to the felicity and improvement of our natures. But the operations of the human intellect, are confined for the moſt part, to thoſe organs of ſenſation which we poſſeſs in common with other animals. And how thus deeply immerſed *in matter* can we reciprocate with an ESSENCE ſo pure and ſpiritual, or indeed how aſſociate with any ſpecies of being, not endowed with the ſame organs that we have? Nor are thoſe who are, furniſhed with capacities and deſires equal to ours. On whom then, or on what, ſhall we proſtitute our affections and hearts? Are we mere *Grubs* to delight only in digging, or *Froth-worms* to inveſt ourſelves in a ſpume that yields to the touch and diſſolves with the wind? And in what are the trifles to which we ſeem ſo immoderately attached, ſuperior? Can any thing be more nugatory or abortive than the

purſuit of fame? Wealth confers an imaginary conſequence indeed, but as certainly petrifies the mind and blaſts our peace. And what is inordinate indulgence of every kind, but additional fermentation to a feveriſh heart? Hear then the Philoſophy of Nature! Her dictates are thoſe of wiſdom and her voice is that of truth. "Reſt not, "O mortals!" ſays ſhe, "in ſtreams that only "lead to the *Fountain*, in a likeneſs that only points "out the *Original*, in effects that only diſcover the "*Cauſe!* What is all that comes, within the cog-"nizance of your ſenſes, but an index to that "divine principle that gave me birth! Does not "infinite ſkill obviouſly pervade my whole frame? "Are the ſelection, arrangement, and poſition of "my parts, the conſtant regularity of my greateſt "and minuteſt movements, the laws to which I "refer, and the harmony I diſplay, no deciſive "characters of intelligence and deſign? Yes. All "the various modifications of elegance, the moſt "exquiſite models of ſymmetry, the niceſt rules "of proportion, the faireſt forms of excellence, "and the ſweeteſt delineations of beauty that mark "my ſeveral productions, revolutions and ap-"pearances, plainly ſuppoſe a contrivance equal "to the execution. Behold in me, the intellec-"tual ſyſtem embodied in a material form, that as "on a publick theatre, the Supreme Being might "thus unveil his glories, and become acceſſible to

"his

" his creatures, by a medium ſo well adapted to " their natures." So that what body is to *mind*, that the viſible creation is to its *Author*, a mere *Senſorium*; to uſe an expreſſion of ſome late philoſophers, by means of which, he diſcovers himſelf to his rational offspring in all that greatneſs which fills them with veneration, in all that effuſion of goodneſs that warms them with gratitude, in all thoſe lovely aſſemblages of beauty, that raviſh them with delight, and in all thoſe indications of the tendereſt attentions to their beſt intereſt, that diſpoſe them to a cordial acquieſcence in every appointment of Providence!

This fine idea, that does more honour to the ſpirit of ancient philoſophy, than all her other diſcoveries put together, unites and completes the univerſal plan of things. All inferior natures are wiſely furniſhed, with an inſtinctive principle that under the moſt diſtreſſing circumſtances points out a remedy. And ſhall the intellectual ſyſtem, animated as it is, by the DIVINITY, in the ſame manner, as the material is, by every ſpecies of ſubordinate life, be leſs provided againſt emergencies or leſs fruitful of reſources? What then would become of the heart, in all ſuch caſes as preclude human ſympathy and comfort. And how frequent is it to meet with the beſt in ſome ſuch deplorable extremity? Many perſons of the greateſt worth, are often in the greaſteſt troubles, with-

without being at liberty to divulge them! Imagination, may ſuffer ſo much from corporeal debility, as to baffle all the powers of medicine and poiſon every ſource of enjoyment. And who that never felt, can poſſibly conceive, how inſufferably exquiſite the pangs of a mind thus diſorded are? Some are ſo deeply affected by a ſucceſſion of misfortunes, ſo piqued at the uniform appearance of contumely from every proſpect that flatters their wiſhes, that they have nothing for it but to ſuffer and be ſilent. A few perhaps, with all the diſſipation and wantonneſs that invade the ſacred elyſium of *love*, may yet be found in ſome diſmal ſolitude, ſighing to the winds, waſting in melancholy or raving in deſpair; the miſerable victim of an abortive paſſion! Others have been ſo often and cruelly abuſed in the tendereſt and ſublimeſt of all regards, have been ſo egregiouſly duped in their choice of friends, have laviſhed their affections on creatures at once ſo inſignificant and aſſuming, ſo affected and contemptible, ſo little in truth and great in idea, ſo fervent in appearance and perfidious in reality, that a ſettled jealouſy and diſtruſt of mankind, and a thouſand intereſting delicacies, render it impoſſible that ever their ſorrows ſhould be fully known but to their own hearts. Who can deſcribe the horrors of a ſenſibility thus deeply

and

and radically wounded? What are all the diſeaſes and deaths that aſſail the body to ſuch a rooted dejection of ſpirit! And where is that philoſophy which having excluded ſupreme benignity from the adminiſtration of the univerſe, can ſuggeſt another ſource of conſolation, equally adequate to all the exigencies of humanity? It is under ſome ſuch calamities as theſe perhaps, that the truth and validity of a ſuperintending Providence is chiefly felt; becauſe then, that all the reſources of nature are unequal to the wants of an immortal mind! Thus driven from every precarious and deceitful refuge, how peculiarly ſoothing to every ſentiment that ariſes from conſcious timidity; that the arms of heaven are always open, and that the great Parent of Nautre can never be indifferent to our well being! How reſolute and magnanimous on all ſuch occaſions the tone of pious reſignation and filial dependence? Figure a good mind, thus deſolate and abandoned, caſt out by the objects of his fondeſt affection, and contemptible in the eyes of the world. No perils can ſhake his confidence or rob him of his hopes. He ſays to himſelf, and ſays it with a dignity and compoſure ſuperior to all affectation,—were events at the diſpoſal or under the controul of any but the beſt of beings, there might be ſome reaſon to ſuſpect the worſt? But O how graceful,

graceful, how orderly, how magnificent, how lovely is nature animated with a ſpirit ſo benevolent, brightened with a preſence ſo benignant, dericted to an end ſo deſireable! All exiſtence rejoices under the management of a wiſdom that never errs, and a bounty that never ſubſides. For nothing can poſſibly go wrong, where ſupreme benignity and infinite power predominate: Yet a little while, and all the perplexities of the natural and jarring contradictions of the moral world, ſhall be fully unravelled. The great concluding ſcene, big as it muſt be, with the fate of worlds, ſhall alſo be a complete vindication of all the miniſtrations of Providence! What then, though the life of man, be as much ruffled and haraſſed with diſaſters as the ocean is with ſtorms! though ſorrows brood and thicken in his mind like clouds in a troubled ſky, and though his deareſt hopes periſh in a moment, as plants are killed by the froſt and blighted by the wind? There is ſtill ONE at the head of affairs and ſuperior to all contingencies in whom my beſt intereſts are perfectly ſecure! Let the hemiſphere deepen and the tempeſt rage!—— let thunders rend the heavens and earthquakes depopulate the world!— let the elements run into confuſion, the pillars of the univerſe tremble and nature go to wreck!— I ſee the preſiding DIVINITY kindly over-ruling every publick

publick and private commotion——I hear his majeſtic voice ſilencing the tumult of things, and bidding the wildeſt uproar of mind, as well as matter, *be ſtill*—I feel his gracious preſence pervading my whole frame, huſhing my diſcordant paſſions into peace, and feaſting every ſenſation of my heart with joy!

Such are ſome of the ſublime dictates which the genius of univerſal Nature inſpires, and with which the Muſe of Thomſon is ſtill in the happieſt uniſon. On this glorious and propitious ſyſtem he reconciles his heart to all thoſe apparent contradictions, which, in the moral government of the world, embroil the preſent ſcene and darken that of futurity. That this is only the ſeed-time of immortality, that our harveſt is reſerved for a purer period, and that the *Seaſons* figuratively as well as literally, depend on a deſtination which nothing can fruſtrate, are ſome of the leading convictions he would imprint on the minds of men. And he rejoices in full concert with the whole world of the *Virtuous*, that when this unaccountable and confounding jumble of things; when all the preſent ſtrange myſterious ſchemes of Providence are unravelled, *human happineſs ſhall appear the neceſſary conſequence of human worth*, as well as the ultimate determination of Heaven. Hence the following paſſage is not more inimitably ſimple and ſublime

than pathetic and conſolatory. And often as it has been quoted from motives of taſte, perchance in company to improve the converſation, or of pedantry in publick to embelliſh the tawdry common place of pulpit declamation, it ſtill poſſeſſes charms enow, to affect the ſerious, and melt the feeling heart.

> Ye good diſtreſs'd!
> Ye noble few! who here *unbending ſtand*
> *Beneath life's preſſure*, yet *bear up* a *while*,
> And what your *bounded view*, which only ſaw
> A *little part*, deem'd *Evil*, is no more:
> The *ſtorms* of WINTRY TIME will *quickly* paſs,
> And one *unbounded* SPRING incircle *all*.

I once intended to have illuſtrated more fully the piety of the *Seaſons*, by a formal paraphraſe of the ſublime Hymn that concludes them. Never ſurely was human compoſition more ſweetly ſtored with the ſentiments of gratitude or richly adorned with the graces of poetry. Simplicity of numbers, elevation of diction, ſublimity of thought and ardour of conception, are its general characteriſtics. To dilate would impair its beauties, and to delineate perhaps debilitate its ſpirit. Thomſon meant it as an epitome of the whole poem. Nor can I better conclude theſe STRICTURES than with *A Hymn on the Seaſons*,

Seaſons, and that ſo directly in point, as to expreſs the very ſentiments of my heart on the ſubject.

The devotional HYMN, *that concludes The* SEASONS.

THESE as they change, ALMIGHTY FATHER, THESE
Are but the *varied* GOD. The rolling year
Is full of Thee. Forth in the pleaſing Spring
THY beauty walks, THY tenderneſs and love.
Wide flush the fields; the ſoftening air is balm;
Echo the mountains round; the foreſt ſmiles;
And every ſenſe, and every heart is joy.
Then comes THY glory in the ſummer-months,
With light and heat refulgent. Then THY ſun
Shoots full perfection thro' the ſwelling year:
And oft THY voice in dreadful thunder ſpeaks;
And oft at dawn, deep noon, or falling eve,
By brooks and groves, in hollow-whiſpering gales.
THY bounty ſhines in Autumn unconfin'd,
And ſpreads a common feaſt for all that lives.
In winter awful THOU! with clouds and ſtorms
Around THEE thrown, tempeſt o'er tempeſt roll'd,
Majeſtic darkneſs! on the whirlwind's wing,
Riding ſublime, THOU bid'ſt the world adore,
And humbleſt Nature with THY northern blaſt.

Myſterious round! what ſkill, what force divine,
Deep-felt in theſe appear! a ſimple train,
Yet ſo delightful mix'd, with ſuch kind art,

Such beauty and beneficence combin'd;
Shade unperceiv'd, ſo ſoftning into ſhade;
And all ſo forming an harmonious whole;
That, as they ſtill ſucceed, they raviſh ſtill.
But wandering oft, with brute unconſcious gaze,
Man marks not THEE, marks not the *mighty hand*
That, ever buſy, *wheels* the ſilent ſpheres;
Works in the ſecret deeps; ſhoots, ſteaming, thence
The fair profuſion that o'er ſpreads the Spring;
Flings from the *ſun direct* the flaming day;
Feeds every creature; *hurls* the tempeſt forth;
And, as on earth this grateful change *revolves*,
With tranſport *touches* all the ſprings of life.

Nature, attend! join every living ſoul,
Beneath the ſpacious temple of the ſky,
In adoration join; and, ardent, raiſe
One general ſong! TO HIM ye *vocal gales*,
Breath ſoft, whoſe SPIRIT in your freſhneſs breathes:
Oh talk of HIM in ſolitary glooms!
Where, o'er the rock, the ſcarcely waving pine
Fills the brown ſhade with a religious awe.
And *ye*, whoſe bolder note is heard afar,
Who ſhake th' aſtoniſh'd world, lift high to heaven
Th' impetuous ſong, and ſay from whom you *rage*.
HIS praiſe ye *brooks*, attune, ye trembling *rills*;
And let me catch it as I muſe along.
Ye headlong *torrents*, rapid, and profound;
Ye *ſofter floods*, that lead the humid maze
Along the vale; and thou, *majeſtic main*,
A ſecret world of wonders in thyſelf,

Sound

Sound His ſtupendous praiſe; whoſe greater voice
Or bids you *roar*, or bids your roarings *fall*.
Soft-roll your incenſe, *herbs*, and *fruits*, and *flowers*,
In mingled clouds to HIM; whoſe *ſun* exalts,
Whoſe *breath* perfumes you, and whoſe *pencil* paints.
Ye *foreſts* bend, ye *harveſts* wave, to HIM;
Breathe your ſtill ſong into the reaper's heart,
As home he goes beneath the joyous moon.

Ye that keep watch in heaven, as earth aſleep
Unconſcious lies, effuſe your mildeſt beams
Ye *conſtellations*, while your angels ſtrike,
Amid the ſpangled ſky, the ſilver lyre.
Great *ſource* of day! beſt image here below
Of thy Creator, ever pouring wide,
From world to world, the vital ocean round,
On Nature write with every *beam* His praiſe.
The *thunder* roll: be huſh'd the proſtrate world;
While cloud to cloud returns the ſolemn hymn.

Bleat out afreſh, ye *hills*; ye *moſſy rocks*,
Retain the ſound: the broad reſponſive lowe,
Ye valleys, *raiſe*; for the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns;
And his *unſuffering* kingdom yet will come.
Ye *woodlands* all, awake: a boundleſs ſong
Burſt from the groves, and when the reſtleſs day,
Expiring, lays the warbling world aſleep,
Sweeteſt of birds! *ſweet Philomela*, charm
The liſtening ſhades, and teach the night His praiſe.

Ye chief, for whom the whole creation ſmiles,
At once the *head*, the *heart*, and *tongue* of all,
Crown the great hymn! in *ſwarming cities* vaſt,
Aſſembled men, to the deep organ join
The long-reſounding voice, oft-breaking clear,
At ſolemn pauſes, through the ſwelling baſe;
And, as each mingled flame increaſes each,
In one united ardor riſe to heaven.
Or if you rather chuſe the rural ſhade,
And find a *fane* in every ſacred grove;
There let the *ſhepherd's flute*, the *virgin's lay*,
The *prompting ſeraph*, and the *poet's lyre*,
Still ſing the GOD of SEASONS, as they roll.

For *me*, when I forget the darling theme,
Whether the bloſſom blows, the ſummer-ray
Ruſſets the plain, *inſpiring* Autumn gleams;
Or winter riſes in the blackening eaſt;
Be *my tongue mute*, may fancy *paint* no more,
And *dead* to joy, forget *my heart* to beat!

Should fate command me to the fartheſt verge
Of the green earth, to diſtant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to ſong; where firſt the ſun
Gilds *Indian* mountains, or his ſetting beam
Flames on th' *Atlantic* iſles; 'tis *nought* to me:
Since GOD is *ever* preſent, *ever* felt,
In the *void waſte* as in the *city full*;
And where HE *vital breathes*, there *muſt* be joy.
When even *at laſt* the ſolemn hour ſhall come,
And wing my *myſtic flight* to *future worlds*,

I chearful

I chearful *will obey*; there, with new powers,
Will *riſing wonders* ſing: I cannot go
Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not ſmiles around,
Suſtaining all *yon orbs* and all *their ſons*;
From *ſeeming evil* ſtill educing *good*,
And *better* thence again, and *better* ſtill,
In infinite progreſſion. But I loſe
Myſelf in HIM, in LIGHT INEFFABLE!
Come then, *expreſſive* ſilence, *muſe* HIS praiſe.

FINIS.